LUFTWAFFE COLOURS

CLASSICOLOURS

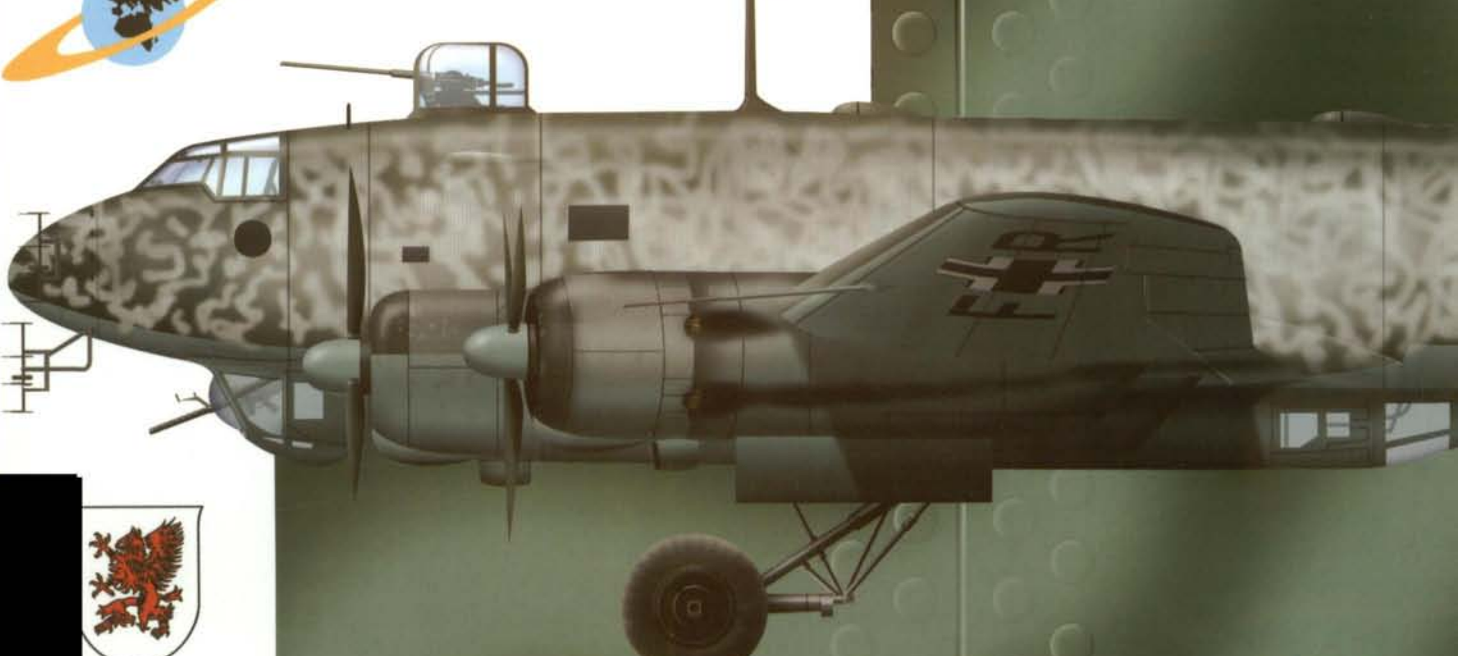
SEA EAGLES

Volume Two

Chris Goss

LUFTWAFFE ANTI-SHIPPING UNITS

1942-45



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Publisher's Note

The study of Luftwaffe camouflage and markings is a complex subject compounded by a general lack of quality colour photographs. Inevitably, therefore, most photographs appearing in this series are black and white and, while the authors and publisher have offered their own assessments of the aircraft colours in these photographs, this naturally involved a degree of guesswork. This should always be considered, even when the use of 'believed to have been' or 'thought to have been' etc, has sometimes been deleted in order to avoid tedious repetition. Recognising that readers may have contrary opinions, we have endeavoured throughout Classic Colours to include as many photographs and as much associated information as possible so that, although the photograph captions, colour profiles and badges have been produced in accordance with the publisher's, authors' and artist's best interpretations, the reader may, if he wishes, reach his own conclusions. Furthermore it should be stressed that the personal accounts contained in this series are as they have been related to the authors and are the product of the individual pilot's personal recollections.

About the Author

Chris Goss is a serving Royal Air Force officer who has studied the 1939-1945 air war for many years and in this regard he has amassed a substantial collection of original wartime material as a result of interviews and extensive correspondence with veterans and their families. His books such as *Bloody Biscay*, *Brothers in Arms* and *Luftwaffe Fighter-Bombers over Britain* have been critically acclaimed for their research. He holds an MA with Merit in War Studies and lives in England with his wife and three daughters.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to thank Eddie Creek, Brian Cull, Robert Forsyth, Manfred Griehl, Ken Merrick, Mark Nelson, Tim Oliver, Peter Petrick and Bernd Rauchbach for their kind assistance with this book.

[redacted]

First published 2006

ISBN (10) 1 903223 56 3
ISBN (13) 978 1 903223 56 7
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© Colour artwork by Tim Brown

Project Editors: Chevron Publishing

Layout Artwork: Mark Nelson

An imprint of Ian Allan Publishing Ltd, Hersham, Surrey KT12 4RG.

Printed in England by Ian Allan Printing Ltd, Hersham, Surrey KT12 4RG.

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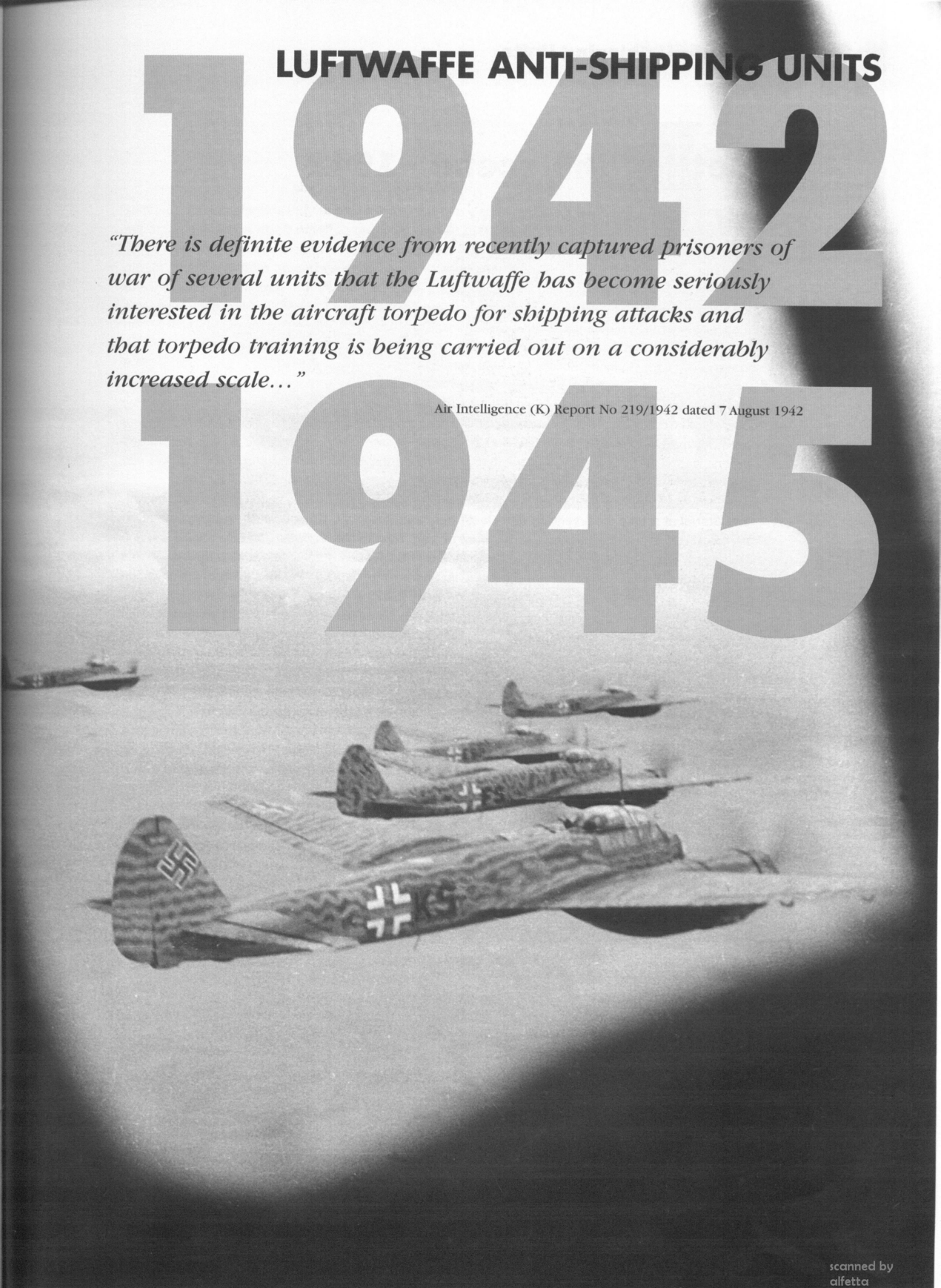
LUFTWAFFE ANTI-SHIPPING UNITS

1942

> *"There is definite evidence from recently captured prisoners of war of several units that the Luftwaffe has become seriously interested in the aircraft torpedo for shipping attacks and that torpedo training is being carried out on a considerably increased scale..."*
>
> Air Intelligence (K) Report No 219/1942 dated 7 August 1942

1945



Setting the scene - 1942

With Germany now fighting both in Russia and North Africa and its anti-shipping aircraft operating in those theatres as well as far north to Norway, south to northern Spain and well out into the Atlantic, it came as no surprise that changes in tactics and formations were needed in respect of the maritime air war. First and foremost, the recently wounded *Fliegerführer Atlantik, Oberst* Martin Harlinghausen, was appointed *Lufttorpedo Inspizient* (Inspector of Airborne Torpedoes) in response to the *Luftwaffe* wanting to centralise and control all German and Italian torpedo development. He became responsible for all development work, supply, training and operational organisations which included the establishment of the Torpedo Training School at Grosseto in Italy.

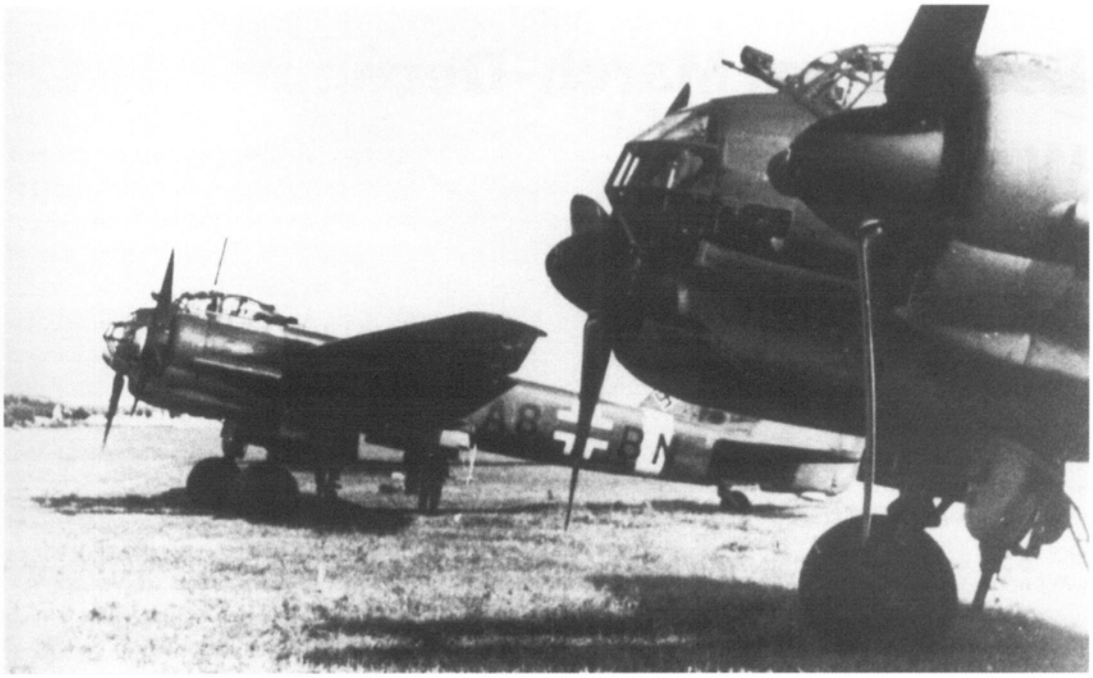
The Torpedo Training School at Grosseto was formed in October 1941 from the original *Torpedoschule der Luftwaffe* at Grossenbrode, the School moving at the end of November 1941. It would appear that it was designated *Kampfschülegeschwader* 2 (KSG 2) and was commanded by *Oberst* Karl Stockmann, former *Gruppen Kommandeur* of Kü.Fl.Gr 406. His two *Gruppen Kommandeur* were *Hptm* Ernst-Heinrich Thomsen, former *Staffel Kapitän* of 2./KGr 506, a unit which had experienced some anti-shipping successes in and around the British Isles flying Heinkel 115 and had recently converted to the Junkers 88, and *Maj* Wilhelm Emonds, formerly of 1./Kü.Fl.Gr 106.

Following the relocation of the Training School, in January 1942 KG 26 began conversion training, one *Staffel* at a time, commencing with *Obstlt* Hermann Busch's I. Gruppe which quickly returned to northern Norway with its Heinkel 111 H-6 *Torp* aircraft. Next to convert was *Oblt* Ernst Haller's 4 and *Oblt* Georg Teske's 5./KG 26, *Oblt* Horst Krupka's 6./KG 26 already being active as a torpedo *Staffel* in the east; all three *Staffeln* were reunited at Saki in the Crimean Peninsula and recommenced operations with Heinkel 111 H-6 *Torp* aircraft in March 1942.

III./KG 26 was a different matter. In December 1941, it was re-designated II./KG 100 but reformed again from *Oberst* Ernst-August Roth's KG 28, this *Geschwader* being just one *Gruppe* which had been involved in anti-shipping and mining missions around the British Isles before it moved to the Russian Front at the end of July 1941; command of the new III./KG 26 remained with *Maj* Franz Böhme, formerly the *Gruppen Kommandeur* of I./KG 28. In May 1942, the *Gruppe,* still with its Heinkel 111s, was re-designated I./KG 1 and a new III. *Gruppe,* commanded by *Hptm* Ernst-Heinrich Thomsen formerly of I./KSG 2 and before that 2/506, was formed from all three *Staffeln* of KGr 506, this *Gruppe* having been flying Junkers 88s from Leeuwarden in Holland under IX. *Fliegerkorps*. The new III. *Gruppe* then commenced torpedo training at Grosseto before returning to Rennes in France. Hence III./KG 26 would now be the first *Gruppe* to use the Junkers 88s in the torpedo role.

It was now clear, following Germany's failure to defeat the Soviet Union by the end of 1941, and their declaration of war on America in December 1941, that both Britain and the United States would increase their support to the Soviet Union, supplying her via Arctic convoys. The *Luftwaffe* realised this

BELOW: Heinkel He 111 H-6s of KG 26 taxi in after a sortie over the Mediterranean. Note the high visibility white Mediterranean theatre markings. Additionally the tyre walls have been painted with an anti-static agent as the tyres were made from synthetic material and not rubber.



LEFT: A rare photograph of Ju 88 A-4s of 4./KG 102, probably taken at Groseto 1942/43. Note the band around the fuselage of A8+BN. The large fitting in place of the more conventional gun sight on the forward firing 7.9 mm machine gun is a telescopic sight.

ABOVE: Tranquil setting for a He 115 of 4./Kü.Fl.Gr 406 coded K6+IM at Sorreisa, 1942. Note the cockpit covers.

and prepared the offensive maritime assets of *Luftflotte* 5 to meet this head on. The task would be left to the Heinkel 111 H-6 *Torp* of I./KG 26, and Junkers 88s of various *Staffeln* of KG 30 (predominantly *Hptm* Hajo Herrmann's III. *Gruppe)* and the Heinkel 115s of 1./406 and 1./906. From March 1942 onwards, these units were destined to quickly make their mark against Allied shipping.

Meanwhile, in the Mediterranean, there were two *Gruppen* actively involved in offensive maritime operations. *Oberst* Joachim Hahn's KGr 606 and *Maj* Richard Linke's KGr 806 had been moved from Lannion in France and Siwerskaja in Russia respectively and from December 1941, were operating over the Mediterranean from Catania in Sicily. Both *Gruppen* were involved in conventional bombing sorties but as convoys in support of Malta increased, anti-shipping operations increased, both *Kampfgruppen* being supported by such conventional Junkers 88-equipped *Kampfgeschwadern* as KG 54, KG 77 and LG 1.

Over the Atlantic, the U-boat war was escalating, especially since America had joined the war. However, the anti-shipping forces assigned to *Genlt* Ulrich Kessler's *Fliegerführer Atlantik* had become somewhat depleted by the other theatres of war. *Hptm* Edmund Daser's I./KG 40 started the year badly, when on 2 January 1942, *Ofw* Herbert Fahje's Focke-Wulf 200 of 3./KG 40 was damaged by *Flak* and force-landed in Spain[1]. I. *Gruppe* then moved north to Trondheim-Vaernes in March 1942 in support of the northern U-boat war and attacks against Arctic convoys. II./KG 40 still flew Dornier 217s under IX. *Fliegerkorps* on predominantly conventional bombing missions whilst *Maj* Robert Kowalewski's III./KG 40 had finished converting from the Heinkel 111 to the Condor and was now the only Condor *Gruppe* still assigned to *Fliegerführer Atlantik,* operating from Bordeaux-Merignac. The only other offensive unit was *Maj* Friedrich Schallmeyer's KGr 106 which started the year under IX. *Fliegerkorps'* command before moving to Dinard in western France and the command of *Fliegerführer Atlantik* in February 1942.

The stage was set and the *Luftwaffe* was poised to commit all of its anti-shipping aircraft into battle. For the first two months of 1942, very few anti-shipping operations were carried out apart from a small number in the Mediterranean and even those attacks caused minor inconveniences to the Allies. However, this was all to change in March 1942.

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[1] Fahje and his crew survived but were killed in an accident at Oerlandet on 29 October 1942

Escalation: March - December 1942

With KG 26 converting to the torpedo role and operations for the first two months of the year limited by the weather, anti-shipping missions were few and far between and even then, most of them tended to be centred around Malta. However, convoys attempting to re-supply the beleaguered Island had the benefit of air cover the closer they came to Malta whilst whenever *Luftwaffe* aircraft approached convoys or Malta's harbours, they were met with a furious barrage of *Flak*.

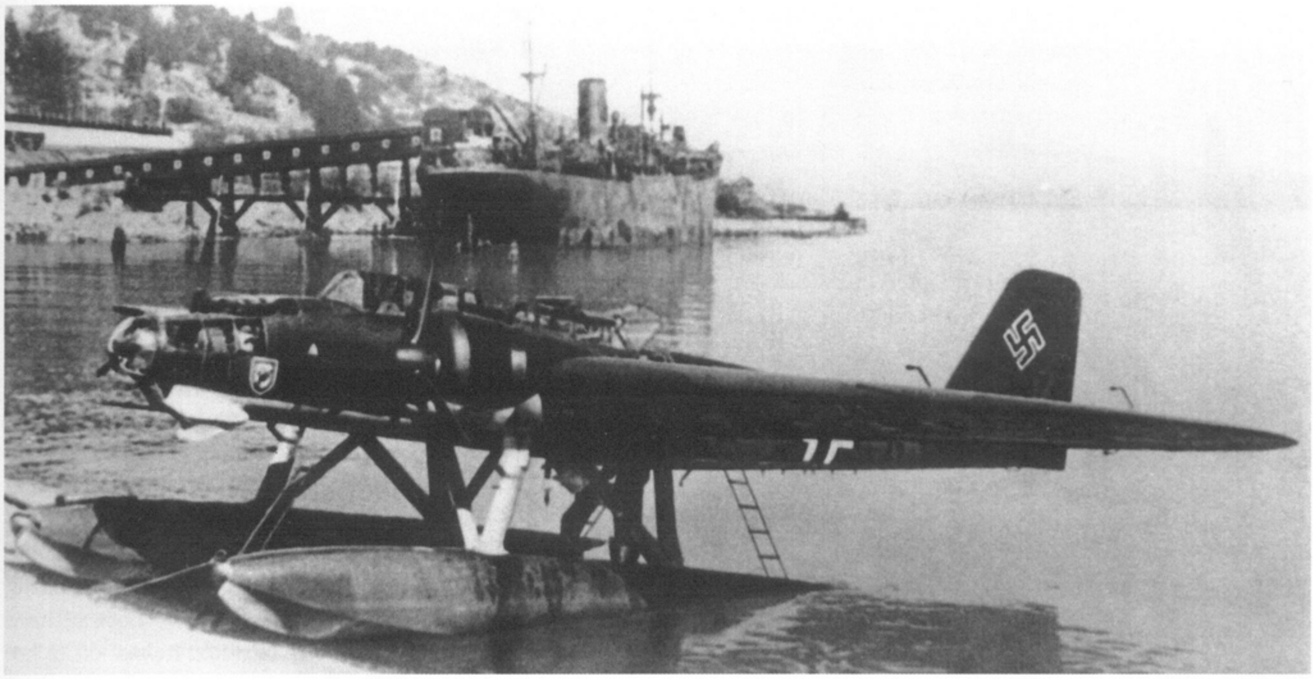
Further east, it was reported that between 13-15 February 1942, Junkers 88s from LG 1 and KG 77 together with Heinkel 111s from II./KG 26 (which was reported at Iraklion in Crete at the end of January 1942) carried out an ineffective attack on two convoys. Meanwhile, on the Russian Front, sporadic attacks were carried out against shipping around Sevastopol with minor successes. However, it soon became evident that the anti-shipping scene of battle was split between the Mediterranean, Malta in particular, and northern Norway.

Torpedo units in Norway now consisted *Hptm* Bert Eicke's I./KG 26 at Bardufoss, *Hptm* Herbert Vater's 1./406 at Sorresia and *Hptm* Eberhard Peukert's 1./906 at Stavanger. The latter two units were both Heinkel 115-equipped, 1/906 having recently moved from western France. The Junkers 88-equipped KG 30 was generally based around Banak and Bardufoss and was active in the conventional bombing role and anti-shipping roles. The first major attack against a convoy took place on 29 March 1942 against PQ 13 but the victor in this case was the weather, which generally helped hide the ships from I./KG 26 and KG 30, although two of the five ships lost were credited to *Hptm* Hajo Herrmann, *Gruppen Kommandeur* of III./KG 30. Four days later, the tanker *Rigmor* was attacked and sunk by the *Luftwaffe* in the northern North Sea; it is presumed that 1./906 was responsible.

It would be nearly another two weeks before a major anti-shipping air attack took place. Thanks to dreadful weather, PQ 14 had mainly managed to avoid the *Luftwaffe* despite being harried for nearly 48 hours. However, the returning PQ 10, which set sail from Murmansk on 10 April 1942, was not as lucky. Four of its 16 ships were sunk and several damaged as it ran the gauntlet of KG 30, the *Geschwader* being credited with two of the sinkings. Again, the same bad weather that protected PQ 14 then came to the aid of the convoy which reached Reykjavik on 21 April 1942.

ABOVE:
An Fw 200 C-4 Condor, coded F8+GT of 9./KG 40, is seen here in 1942. The individual aircraft letter 'G' was black outlined in yellow.

Meanwhile, back in the Mediterranean, the maritime air war was also starting to escalate. On 20 March 1942, a convoy consisting of the auxiliary supply ship HMS *Breconshire*, whose cargo consisted of high explosive and kerosene, accompanied by the freighters *Clan Campbell*, *Pampas* and *Talabot* sailed from Alexandria for Malta. The next day, the convoy was met by HMS *Cleopatra,* three other cruisers and 16 destroyers, whilst air cover was provided and three submarines patrolled to the north. On 22 March, there were several ineffective attacks by Italian aircraft but it was reported that a sizeable Italian surface fleet was aiming to intercept. What then followed was the Battle of Sirte Gulf and by the end of 22 March, the as yet unscathed merchantmen were so far south that they could not reach Malta under the cover of darkness that night. As the main escort no longer had the fuel or ammunition to provide effective cover, the merchantmen were ordered to break convoy and head for Malta at full speed. The *Breconshire* was still accompanied by the destroyers *Southwold* and *Beaufort* and the AA cruiser *Carlisle* and by daybreak, she and her escort were only 20 miles from Malta but it was then that the *Luftwaffe* attacked. Air support was requested but nothing was available to cover the ships as they approached Malta; and a single Junkers 88 commenced the first attack followed by Messerschmitt 109 fighter-bombers from 10./*JG* 53 which scored three hits. The Junkers 88s returned at regular intervals scoring more hits, by which time *Breconshire* was lying dead in the water, 10 miles from harbour.



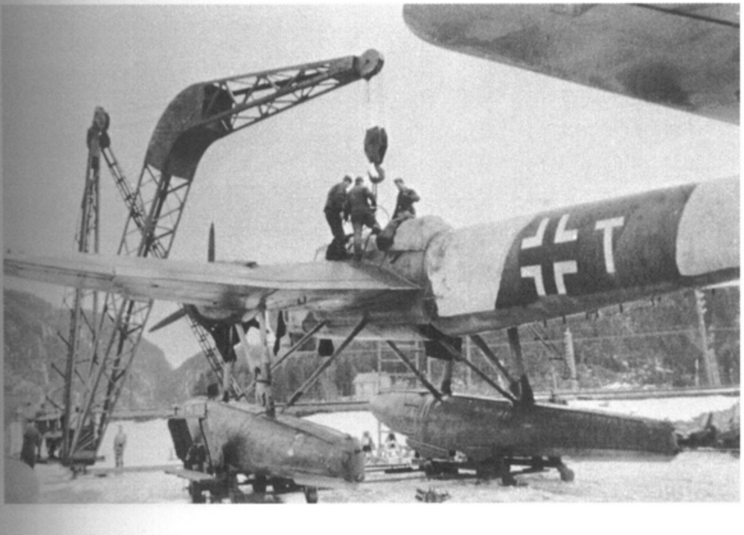
ABOVE: This He 115 B-1 of 2./Kü.Fl.Gr 506 lies moored on a slipway beside a small shipping terminal, somewhere on the Baltic coast. The aircraft has the factory splinter pattern of RLM 72 and 73 on the uppersurfaces with RLM 65 underneath. It would also have carried the unit code S4 in front of the fuselage Balkenkreuz cross.

Meanwhile, the *Clan Campbell* was attacked and sunk but the *Pampas* and *Talabot* managed to make it to Grand Harbour late on 23 March, the *Breconshire* being towed into harbour nearly two days later. As offloading commenced, the *Luftwaffe* continued its onslaught against the three ships, one then being sunk and the other scuttled to prevent its cargo of ammunition from exploding. Finally, on the evening of 26 March, a lone Junkers 88 scored four direct hits on the *Breconshire* which caused a fire that was quickly brought under control only for it to flare up again early the next day. Eventually, the devastated *Breconshire* sank, together with its precious cargo.

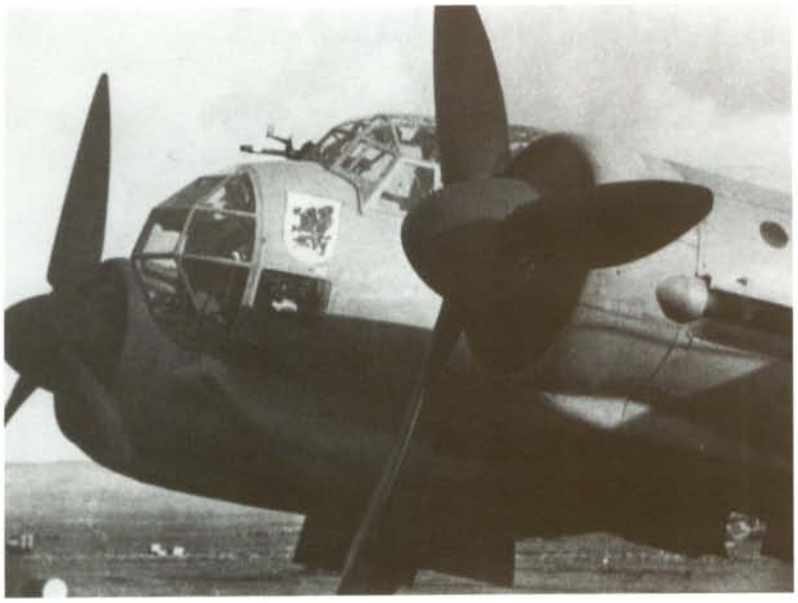
All four merchantmen had been lost which was a considerable blow to Malta's lifeline, the loss of their cargoes hampering Malta's offensive and defensive capabilities for the coming months. The *Luftwaffe* prevented nearly 90% of the ammunition being carried by the *Pampas* and *Talabot* from being offloaded; no cargo was offloaded from the *Breconshire* and, obviously, *Clan Campbell.* The losses suffered by the *Luftwaffe* during the attacks on these convoys were just five aircraft - on 23 March a Messerschmitt 109 from 10./*JG* 53 flown by *Uffz* Josef Fankhauser and four Junkers 88 flown by *Lt* Hermann Janzig of 3./KG 54, *Lt* Walter Kipfmüller of 2./606 and *Lt* Hermann Damask and *Fw* Herbert Augustin of 2./806.

The tempo of the air war over and around Malta continued in April 1942, the depleted RAF fighter resources being reinforced by Spitfires of 601 and 603 Squadrons flying off the carrier USS *Wasp* on 20 April. The following month saw a slight respite, the German bomber forces being redistributed to other fronts or around the Mediterranean, continuity being supplied by KGr 606 and KGr *806.* However, further east, the Royal Navy, in its attempts to hamper Axis convoys, was taught a painful lesson as to the potency of air power.

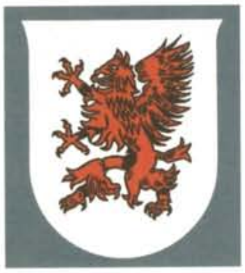
I./LG 1 commanded by *Hptm* Joachim Helbig, and II./LG 1, commanded by *Hptm* Gerhard Kollewe, both highly experienced bomber pilots, were ideally situated at Iraklion in Crete to intercept Allied warships preying on Axis convoys between Italy and Benghazi. On the morning of 11 May 1942, five Junkers 88s of I./LG 1 on a routine armed reconnaissance south of Crete spotted four British destroyers 100 kilometres south of the Island. The presence of HMS *Lively,* HMS *Kipling,* HMS *Jackal* and HMS *Jervis* was reported back to Iraklion and early in the afternoon, 14 Junkers 88s from I. *Gruppe* led by *Hptm* Helbig took off to attack. Each



BELOW: Sitting on its beaching trolley, this He 115 B-1 is being made ready for action with the use of a crane to help deliver ammunition to the cockpit. The original standard camouflage pattern of the upper - surfaces of RLM 72/73 has been modified for winter conditions by overpainting some of the upper - surfaces with large patches of washable white paint. The aircraft belonged to 1./ Kü.Fl.Gr 406 and was coded K6+TH. The unit code in front of the Balkenkreuz has been painted over, with the individual aircraft letter 'T' left in white and the Staffel letter 'H' still just visible in black.



ABOVE:
A Ju 88 A-4/Trop of LG 1 awaits its next mission under a Mediterranean sun. It carries an upper fuselage scheme of blue (RLM 78) over a lower scheme of blue (RLM 65). This scheme was used on some LG 1 machines for operations over water. The LG 1 emblem comprised a red-winged griffon set against a white shield. The large 'black dot' on the port engine cowling is a viewing window for the ground crew to observe the engine oil level.



aircraft carried two 500 kg and two 250 kg bombs and these were successfully dropped on the luckless destroyers, despite the best efforts of Beaufighters of 272 Squadron which were escorting the warships. HMS *Lively* was hit by bombs dropped by *Ofw* Otto Leupert of 1. *Staffel* and following near misses from other aircraft, she quickly sank. Two hours later, II. Gruppe carried out a second attack without success but that evening, a further seven aircraft, again led by *Hptm* Helbig, attacked out of the setting sun. This time HMS *Kipling* and HMS *Jackal* were hit by bombs dropped by *Hptm* Helbig and *Oblts* Iro Ilk, Gerhard Brenner and Gerhard Backhaus. The *Kipling* sank fast and the *Jackal* was set on fire. The only remaining destroyer, *Jervis*, was lucky not to have suffered the same fate and it was left to her to try and tow the *Jackal* back to Alexandria but by early the following morning, it was obvious that the *Jackal* would not make it. With 630 survivors taken on board from the three other destroyers, the *Jervis* sank the hulk of the *Jackal* north-east of the African coast.

It would appear that the air war over the Mediterranean in the following months would be much quieter, the *Luftwaffe* being hampered by increasing numbers of fighter aircraft from Malta. However, of note were the two convoys attempting to make for Malta in the middle of June 1942. It had been decided to sail convoy *Harpoon* eastwards from Gibraltar and convoy *Vigorous* out of Alexandria. *Harpoon* sailed on 12 June and a day later was being shadowed by the *Luftwaffe*. The convoy was escorted by the carriers *Eagle* and *Argus* and it was the Hawker Sea Hurricanes and Fairey Fulmars from these carriers that had to initially parry Axis attacks, predominantly from the *Regia Aeronautica*. The first freighter was torpedoed and sunk on 14 June, a second on 15 June with another two being so badly damaged that it was decided to deliberately sink them. The attacks on 15 June were attributed to I./KG 54 and KGr 806, the latter unit being credited with sinking the two damaged freighters before they could be deliberately sunk by the Allies. With just two freighters left, protection came from Malta's fighters as Flt. Lt. Laddie Lucas of 249 Squadron reported:

> *"The Ju 88s were flying straight and level in quite tight boxes of four aircraft each. They hadn't seen us coming out of the darkening eastern sky. I gave the instructions... Lint and Watty* [Plt. Offs. Ozzie Linton and Les Watts] *would take the starboard box and Jonesie* [Plt. Off. F E Jones] *and I the one to port...The rear gunners never saw us as we attacked upwards from underneath against the dark waters below...it was difficult to see the results but Watty and I reckoned that we had shared an 88 between us, Jonesie got another flamer while Lint and I felt we had severely damaged an additional 88 apiece."*

It would appear that the unsuspecting Junkers 88s were from 2./806 and were flown by the *Staffel Kapitän, Oblt* Kurt Kehrer, and *Uffz* Heinz Kaufmann; neither crews survived.

Meanwhile, convoy *Vigorous* was not as lucky. Just after setting sail, two freighters had to turn back due to technical problems; one of them was later sunk in Tobruk harbour during an air raid. For the next two days, the convoy was harried by I./KG 54 and I./LG 1, accounting for the freighter *Bhutan* and damaging the *Potaro*. However, it was the threat of the Italian battleships *Littoria* and *Vittorio Veneto* that forced the decision for the convoy to turn back.

The cost to the *Luftwaffe* was minimal and Malta continued to struggle on against overwhelming odds for another two months when the next major attempt was made to re-supply the island. During the two months, the maritime air war far to the north of Europe continued to escalate.

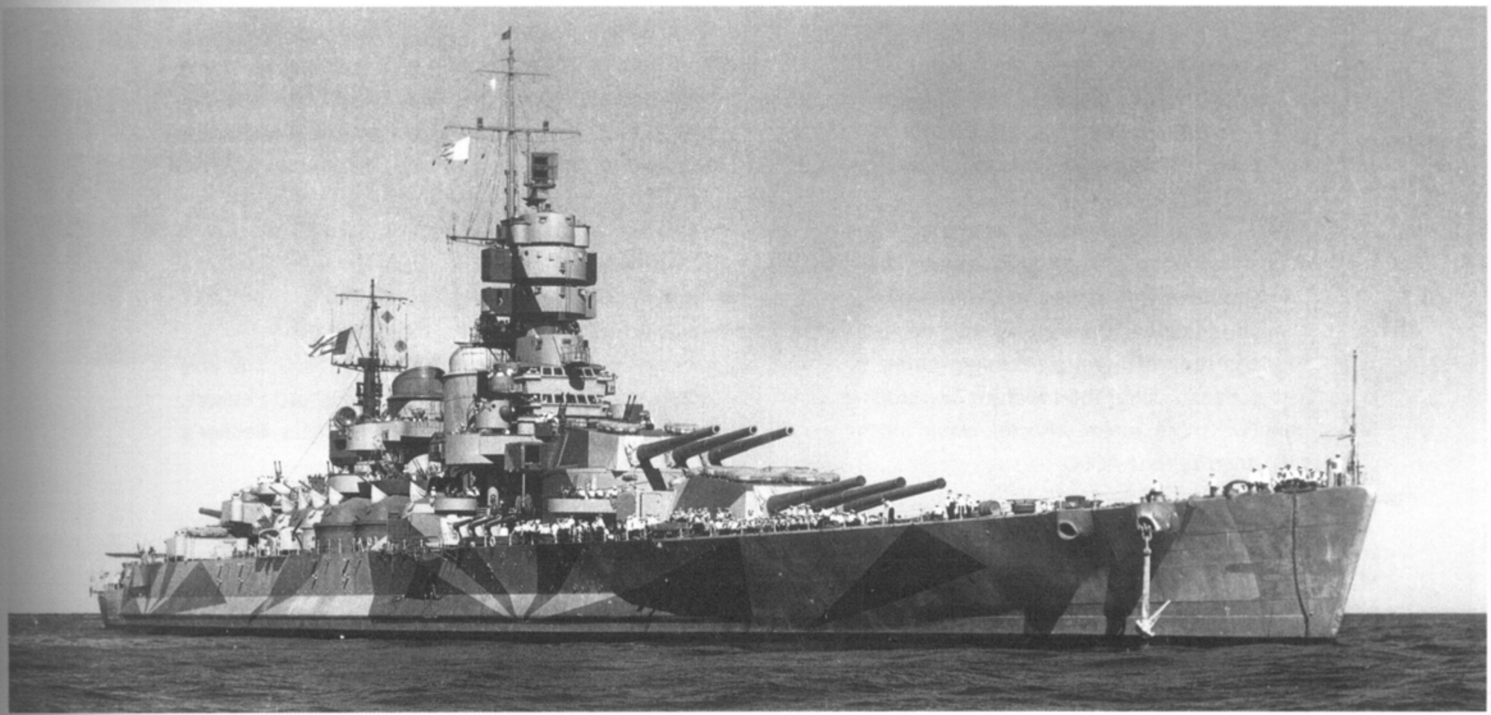
Following the return of QP 10, at the end of April 1942, it was the turn of PQ 15 and QP 11. Both were heavily escorted by cruisers and PQ 15 was escorted by the battleships *King George V* and the *USS Washington*. However, despite attacks by U-boats, it was not until 1 May that the first air attacks materialised against QP 11; no ships were hit. The following day it was the turn of PQ 15 which was having its run of bad luck. The day before *King George V* had rammed and sunk the destroyer *Punjabi* whose exploding depth charges then damaged the battleship. On 2 May 1942, PQ 15's escort sank in error the Polish submarine *Jastrzeb,* all of this taking place before the *Luftwaffe* attacked on the morning of 3 May. It was left to six aircraft from I./KG 26 led by the acting *Gruppen Kommandeur* and *Staffel Kapitän* of 3./KG 26, *Hptm* Bert Eicke to carry out the low-level attack. Two Heinkel 111s were claimed as shot down and another badly damaged; one loss was the aircraft commanded by *Oblt* Kurt Sauer, *Staffel Kapitän* of 2./KG 26; Sauer would be awarded the *Deutsches Kreuz in Gold* posthumously just over a month later. The attack resulted in the sinking of the *Botavon* and *Cape Corso,* the latter exploding spectacularly, and badly damaging the *Jutland* which was later sunk by a U-boat; the remaining 22 ships arrived unscathed at Murmansk on 5 May 1942. Aircraft failed to intercept QP 11 which was subsequently attacked by U-boats and German warships.

The next action occurred on the evening of 14 May 1942 and involved the cruiser *Trinidad* which was returning from Murmansk after being repaired following damage incurred during PQ 13 in March 1942. She and her escort were discovered off the North Cape and attacked by KG 30 and elements from I./KG 26. However, it was a lone and unidentified Junkers 88 that set the cruiser on fire with two hits; with the fire out of control, the *Trinidad* was scuttled the following day.

It was not until the end of May 1942 that the next convoys materialised. QP 12 returned unscathed but PQ 16 was heavily attacked by 2 and 3./KG 26, KG 30 and Heinkel 115s of 1./406 and 1./906 between 25 and 29 May 1942, sinking six ships, including the catapult armed merchantman *Empire Lawrence,* and damaging numerous others. Analysis of the tactics adopted in the attacks makes interesting reading:

> *Bombing Attacks: The Naval Authorities attribute the* [Luftwaffe's] *successes during the period of the most intensive operations from 1115 to 2130 hours on 27 May chiefly to the fact that the weather at the time was clouds but not completely overcast. The Junkers 88 pressed home their attacks during this period to a much greater extent than when the sky was cloudless or completely overcast. The aircraft are reported to have dived at 60 degrees to a height of about 1000 feet before releasing their bombs of which they are reported to have carried four...*
>
> *Torpedo Attacks: The operations by torpedo-carrying aircraft do not appear to have been very successful. The aircraft approached flying low and released their torpedoes at about 10 feet. There is little information on ranges but it is known that the only hit obtained was the result of random shots from 4000 yards and that, in general, the attacks were not pressed home.*

BELOW: The massive battleship Vittorio Veneto, one of the Italian ships responsible for convoy Vigorous turning back.



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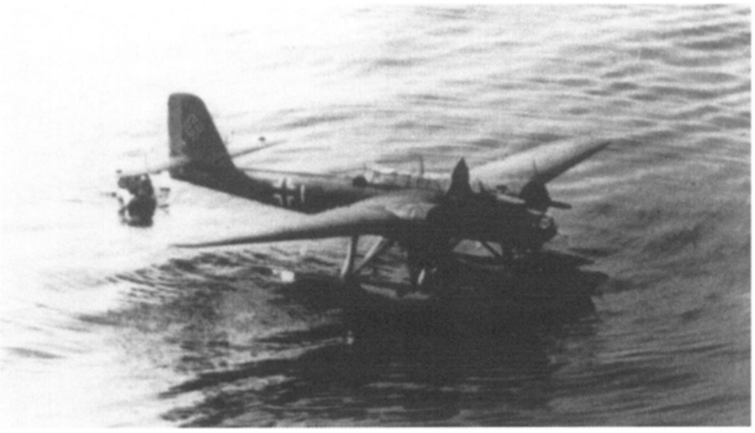


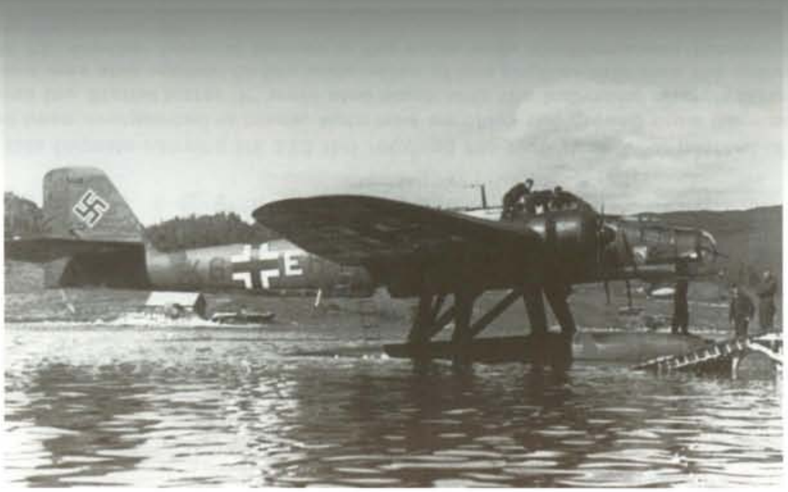
ABOVE:
Heinkel 115 coded K6+IH of 1./406 commanded by Oblt Burmeister seen picking up Hptm Herbert Vater, of 1./406, 2 July 1942. The photograph above right shows their arrival at Sorreisa.

RIGHT:
Oblt Burmeister toasts the safe return of Hptm Vater.

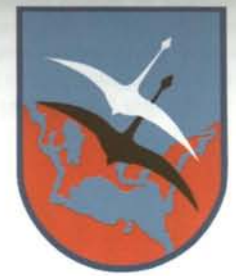
If this was true of PQ 16, PQ 17, which set sail from Reykjavik on 27 June 1942, was to receive dreadful punishment. Much has been written about this convoy of 36 ships, two of which were forced to turn back. Close escort consisted of six destroyers and four corvettes with two British and two American cruisers and destroyers in support, whilst distant cover was given by the battleships *Duke of York* and the *USS Washington* as well as the carrier *Victorious* and numerous cruisers and destroyers.

The first air attack was not carried out until 2 July when *Hptm* Herbert Vater's 1./406 attempted an unsuccessful torpedo attack, Vater being shot down by anti-aircraft fire from HMS *Fury.* Vater's seaplane was forced to ditch away from the convoy and as HMS *Wilton* approached to pick up Vater and his crew, the Heinkel 115 commanded by *Oblt* Karl-Hermann Burmeister, picked up the survivors, and took off again, returning safely to Sorreisa. Two days later, it was the turn of 1./906, the only success being the freighter *Christopher Newport* sunk by the *Staffel Kapitän Hptm* Eberhard Peukert. Two more major attacks would occur later in the day and are best described in Cajus Becker's *Angriffshöhe* 4000:

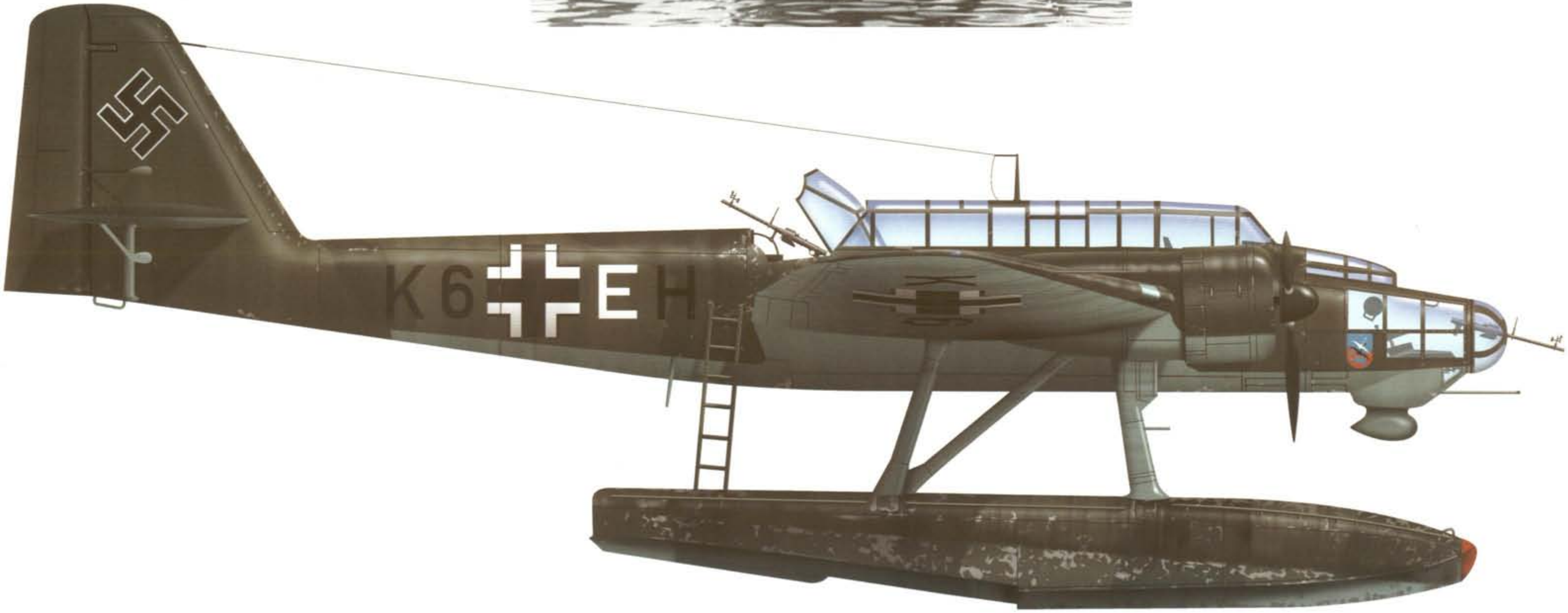
> *"At 1930, a* Staffel *from* KG *30 at Banak made the first attack...but their bombs fell all around the ships and no hits were registered.*
>
> *"An hour later a larger formation appeared in the sky...I./*KG *26 led by...Hptm. Bert Eicke. Eicke ordered his 25 Heinkel 111s to execute a pincer movement and they came in low over the water from several directions.*



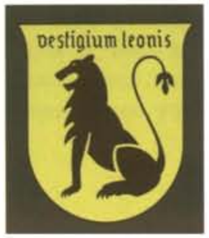
LEFT Maintenance crews working on a He 115 C belonging to 1./Kü.Fl.Gr 406 coded K6+EH. In order to provide more defensive armament, this variant was fitted with an additional fixed MG 151 20 mm cannon under the nose.



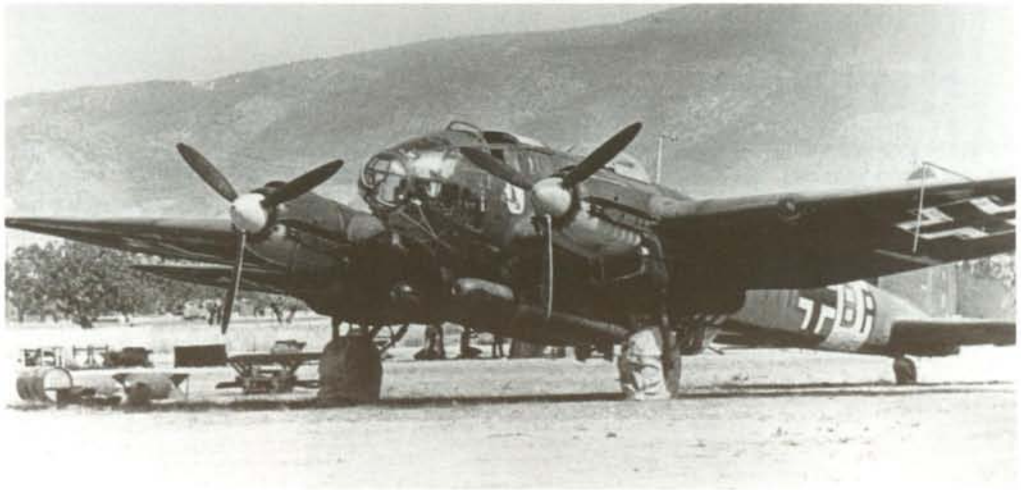
Emblem of
1./Kü.Fl.Gr 406



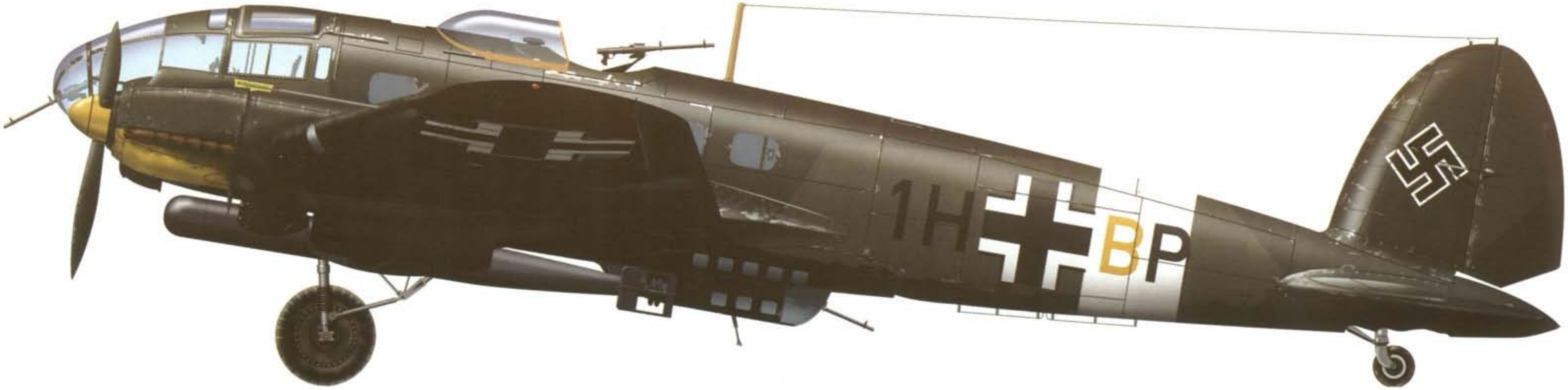
Heinkel He 115 C of 1./Kü.Fl.Gr 406
This aircraft typifies the standard factory splinter pattern of RLM 72/73 with RLM 65 underneath. The unit code 'K6' and the Staffel letter 'H' were painted in black with the individual aircraft letter 'E' in white. The unit emblem has been painted on the nose just aft of the nose gunner's glazing.



Emblem of KG 26



LEFT: A Heinkel He 111 H-6 converted to carry torpedoes belonging to 6./KG 26, stands ready for a mission on an airfield in southern France. The aircraft is coded 1H+BP with the individual aircraft letter 'B' in yellow on a white Mediterranean theatre fuselage band. The emblem of KG 26 is painted on the nose and on this occasion the spinners have also been painted yellow for the Staffel colour. Note the torpedoes have yet to be armed.



Heinkel He 111 H-6 of 6./KG 26

Although operating in the Mediterranean theatre this torpedo-carrying He 111 H-6 retained the factory splinter pattern of RLM 70/71 on the uppersurfaces but the RLM 65 undersides had been overpainted in black. Note how carefully the ground crew have painted around the underside wing Balkenkreuz. The unit code '1H' and the Staffel letter 'P' were also black with the individual aircraft letter 'B' being painted in the 6. Staffel colour of yellow. This colour was also applied to the undersides of the engines and also the spinners, with the exception of the back-plate which was left in RLM 71. Another unusual feature is the extra wide Mediterranean Theatre band painted in white right around the rear fuselage encompassing the letters 'BP'.

> "Lt *Konrad Hennemann*[2] [1 Staffel] *had set himself to torpedo a major warship. Now, as they came in, only destroyers and other lesser vessels lay ahead. The rest were all merchantmen. He found himself wrapped in a curtain of projectiles and smoke. Finally his torpedo struck the 4,941 ton freighter* Navarino *but at the same time his aircraft suffered multiple hits. It crashed into the water not far from his victim and sank.*
>
> *"Also hit was the Heinkel of* Lt *Georg Kanmayr* [1. Staffel]. *Dazzled by the sunlight reflected from a patch of mist, he never noticed he was headed for a destroyer. The first shell smashed the canopy, wounding both Kanmayr and his observer,* Fw *Felix Schlenkermann, but they managed to ditch and all four of the crew were rescued by the same British destroyer that had shot them down.*
>
> "Hptm *Eicke's torpedo struck the 7,177 ton American freighter* William Hooper *which was abandoned and later sunk by U-334..."*

ABOVE: A Junkers Ju 88 of I./KG 77 at Gerbini, Italy in October 1942 receives some maintenance on its Jumo 211 V-12 engines from ground staff. Note the name 'Fanny' on the nose.

The threat of German surface warships, specifically the *Tirpitz, Lutzow, Admiral Scheer* and *Admiral Hipper* now forced the Royal Navy to make a terrible decision. On the evening of 4 July 1942, the support cruisers were ordered to withdraw and the unprotected convoy ordered to scatter. 31 merchantmen tried to make for the islands of Novaya Zemlya before heading south for Archangel but there were easy pickings for the *Luftwaffe* and U-boats. On 5 July, another six Heinkel 115s from 1./906 led by *Oblt* Wolfgang Herwartz carried out an ineffective torpedo attack and from then on, it was predominantly KG 30 and the U-boats who preyed on the helpless freighters. A total of just 11 surviving freighters and two rescue ships eventually arrived at Archangel between 9 and 28 July; 24 had been sunk by U-boats and the *Luftwaffe;* the German warships did not venture forth until 5 July by which time the convoy had scattered. There would now be no further convoys to Russia for another two months.

The next two months saw a reorganisation and re-designation of the *Luftwaffe's* maritime units. KGr 606 became I./KG 77, the old I./KG 77 being re-designated I./KG 6, which would be a conventional *Kampfgeschwader.* The former *Kommodore* of KGr 606 had already been given command of KG 6 as it began forming but for this maritime pilot, his tenure would be short. On 3 June 1942 whilst on a transfer flight in a Messerschmitt 108 from *Stab/*KG 6, *Ritterkreuz* holder *Obstlt* Joachim Hahn was shot down into the sea by two Spitfires of 401 Squadron flown by Flt Lt E C Neal and Flt Sgt S C Cosburn, north-east of Le Treport. KGr 806 now became III./KG 54 and together with I./KG 77 remained in the Mediterranean.

In France, *Maj* Gerd Roth's KGr 106, which had continued to fly precision attacks against both mainland and maritime targets, was re-designated II./KG 6. However, not all of the *Gruppe* transferred. Despite the Battle of the Atlantic escalating, *Fliegerführer Atlantik's* air assets were still a shadow of their former selves. The Allies had realised that German U-boats had to transit the Bay of Biscay to either get to their patrol areas or to return, sometimes with their U-boats damaged. Accordingly, there was an increase in Allied aircraft flying from south-west Britain to attack U-boats. Short Sunderland flying boats and more conventional Vickers Wellingtons and Armstrong Whitworth Whitleys met with some successes and could avoid German fighter or coastal patrol aircraft as long as they kept well out of their range. It quickly became obvious to *Fliegerführer Atlantik* that they needed some form of long-range fighter cover to protect U-boats and more vulnerable aircraft such as the Focke-Wulf 200. These fighters could also intercept the British anti-submarine aircraft and any aircraft transitting the Bay of Biscay as well as being able to defend themselves.

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[2] Hennemann was posthumously awarded the Ritterkreuz on 3 September 1942 for his actions.

ABOVE: Hptm Gerd Korthals, seen here with 2./KGr 100, was a highly successful bomber pilot who had also led 8./KG 51 in Russia. He had been awarded the Deutsches Kreuz in Gold on 16 July 1942 and the Ritterkreuz on 2 October 1942 by which time he was Kommandeur of V./KG 40. He would be killed in an accident at Lorient on 3 November 1942.

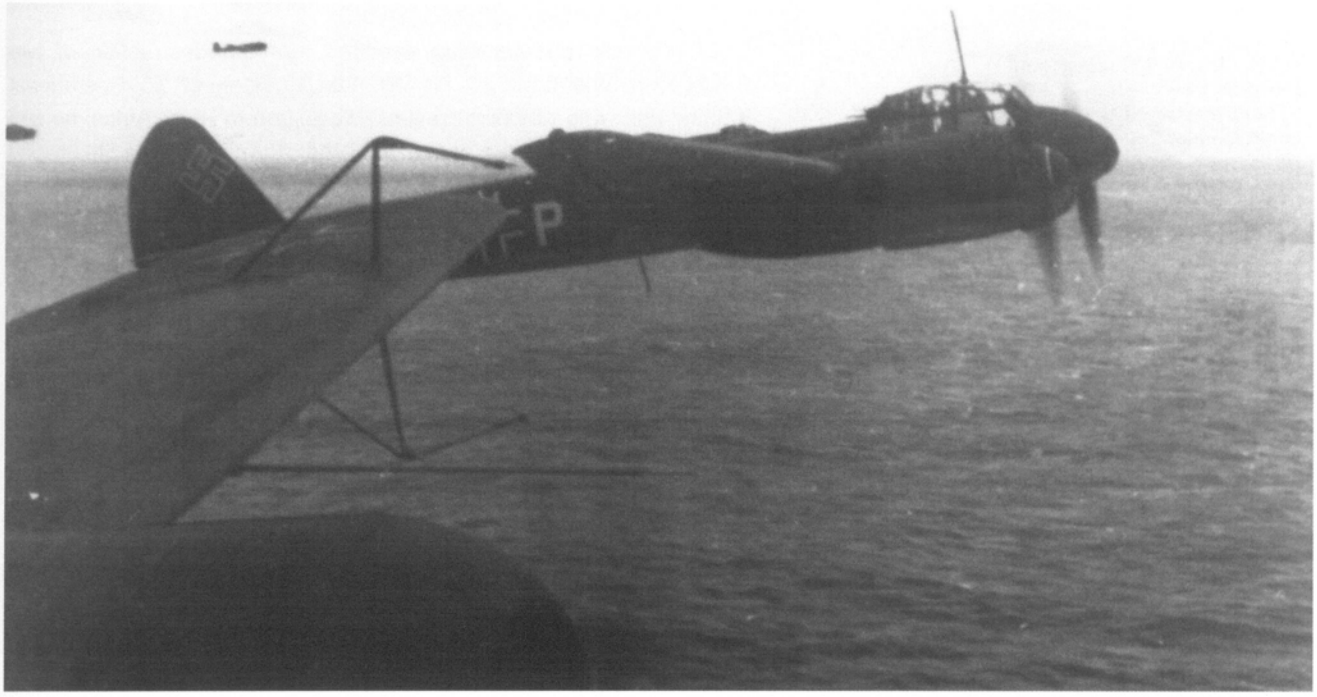
No solution was obvious but early in 1942, the latest variant of the Junkers Ju 88 night fighter, the C-6, was coming off the production line and someone must have remembered the experiences of *Oblt* Herbert Bönsch's *Z/*KG 30 in Norway in 1940 when its Junkers 88 C-2s carried out long-range escort, interception and ground-attack missions. Accordingly, on or about 10 June 1942, four Junkers 88 C-6s appeared at Bordeaux airfield and from then on, there would be a dramatic change in the air war over the Bay of Biscay.

The new unit seems to have had a series of designations *Zerstörerstaffel*/KGr 106, *Zerstörerkommando*/KG 6, III./KG 40 and even IV/KG 40. Some of the aircraft carried a mix of '3E' (KG 6) or 'F8' (KG 40) codes which adds to the confusion. It is possible that the initial commanding officer of this unit was *Hptm* Carlhanns Weymar, who was then killed on 22 July 1942 when his Junkers 88 collided with a Condor flown by *Fw* Alfred Praschl of 9./KG 40 during air combat training. However, the accepted initial *Gruppen Kommandeur* was *Deutsches Kreuz in Gold* and *Ritterkreuz* holder *Hptm* Gerd Korthals, former *Staffel Kapitän* of 2./KGr 100 and 8./KG 51.

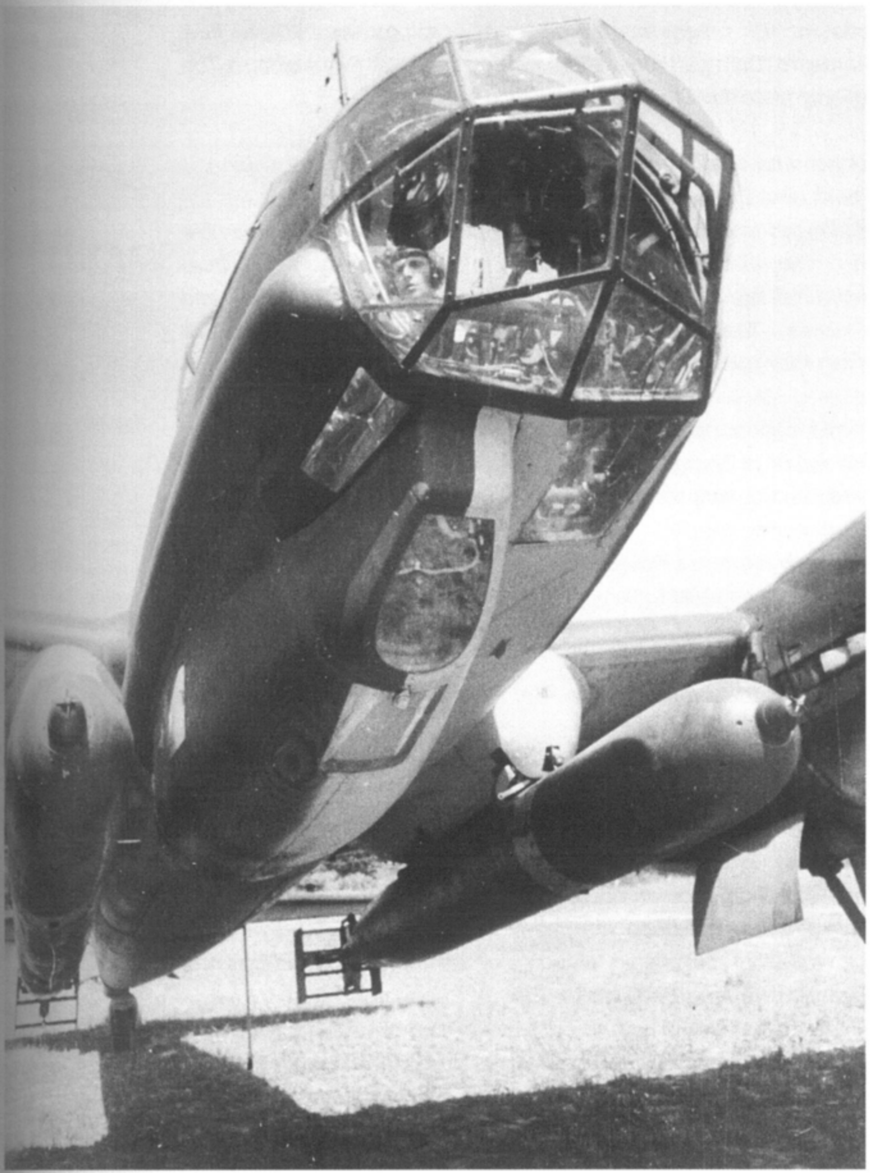
The first recorded kill came on 15 July 1942 when *Fw* Henny Passier shot down a Wellington of 311 Squadron, with the loss of all of the Czech crew; the first documented report of a kill for the new unit, which also saw its first loss, was recorded by *Luftflotte West* on 11 September 1942:

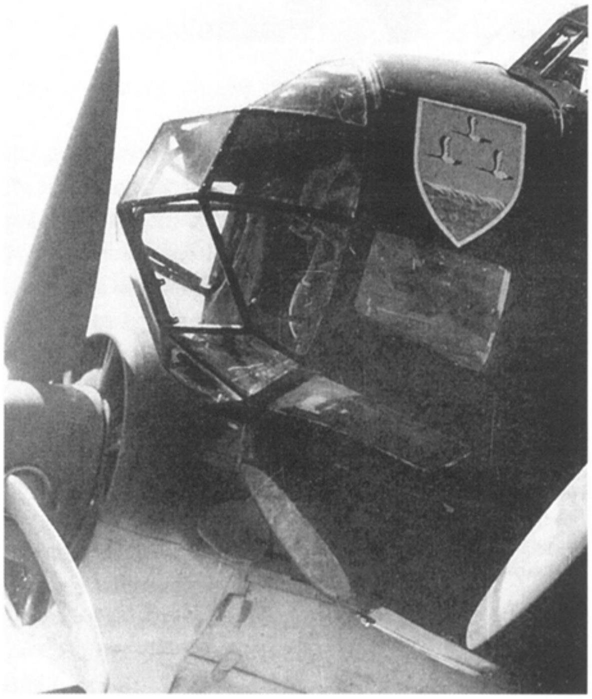
> *"20 July 1942: Two Wellingtons shot down by* Lt [Karl] *Stöffler. Junkers 88 coded 'KD' 1210 hours. We climbed at once and started our attack. In the first and second attacks, we used all of our guns. Hits were seen on the fuselage, wing and starboard engine. Pieces of the wing flew off, the enemy caught fire, the undercarriage was lowered and the plane hit the water. Then a second Wellington appeared flying from north to south. It immediately turned west so we climbed and attacked. All our guns were fired. During the first attack, we encountered heavy defensive fire and our plane was hit several times. The enemy then caught fire but by this time* Lt *Stöffler and the observer* Ofw [August] *Möller were out of action. The Ju 88 was in danger of crashing so* Bordfunker Ofw [August] *Werner climbed into the cockpit and managed to gain height. Turning in a wide circle to starboard just using ailerons, land came into sight. With the starboard engine on fire,* Ofw *Werner managed to ditch and throw off the canopy roof. Two hours later he was picked up by a trawler."*

BELOW: Another view of the Junkers Ju 88 named 'Fanny' of I./KG 77, at Gerbini, Italy in October 1942. Note the SC 100 (1000 kg) bombs the foreground.



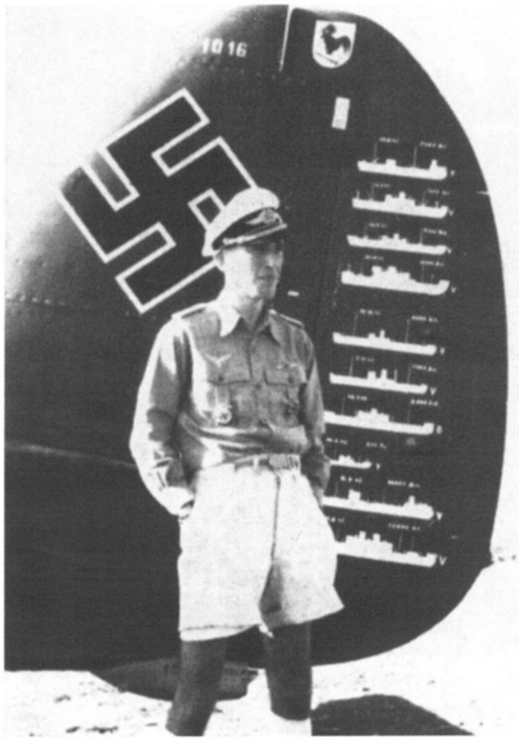
RIGHT: Junkers Ju 88 C-6's of V./KG 40 escorting a Fw 200 C-4 Condor over the Bay of Biscay in 1942/43. The Ju 88 has stationed itself very close to the wing tip of the Condor, obstensibly one can assume to have his photograph taken! Note the aerial on the port wing of the Condor - part of the shipping search FuG Rostock radar.





ABOVE: When 1./Kü.Fl.Gr 506 was reformed it was re-designated as 1./KGr. 506 and re-equipped into a pure bomber Staffel flying Ju 88 A-4s. The unit retained the badge of 'three seagulls flying over the waves' and the code S4. KGr 506 became III./KG 26 in May 1942.

LEFT: A Ju 88 A-17 loaded with two LT F5b torpedoes awaits to taxi. The longitudinal bulge down the starboard side contains equipment for adjusting the steering mechanism of the torpedoes in the air from the cockpit. Note the 'air rudders' at the rear of the torpedoes; they came away when the torpedo entered the water, but remained long enough to prevent the torpedo from rolling while the engine started up and gathered revolutions/speed.



ABOVE: Lt Johannes Geismann, in tropical outfit, started his anti-shipping career with KG 606. He was awarded the Ritterkreuz on 21 December 1942 with 1./KG 77 and was credited with sinking 98,000 BRT of shipping. He ended the war on night fighters. Note his Ju 88 still has the KGr 606 badge on the top of the rudder.

Lt Stöffler was posthumously credited with the destruction of two Wellingtons, one flown by Plt Off Alan Houston of 15 Operational Training Unit, who was delivering his Wellington to North Africa; he and his crew were never seen again. The other flown by Flt Sgt Smallwood was luckier, he and his crew managed to escape and unknowingly were responsible for the new German unit's first loss. There would be many more such combats and losses for both sides in the next two years.

The final change to the *Luftwaffe's* maritime order of battle was the renaming of III./KG 26 as I./KG 1 and the forming of a new III. *Gruppe* from KGr 506. The new III./KG 26 was the first *Gruppe* to now fly torpedo attacks. The new *Gruppe,* commanded by *Hptm* Ernst-Heinrich Thomsen, formerly of KGr 506 and I./KSG 2, moved from Leeuwarden in Holland to Grosseto in May 1942 and then moved to Rennes in France in the middle of July 1942. A few conventional bombing attacks then took place, the first loss being the Junkers 88 commanded by *Lt* Kurt-Günther Desamari which crashed near Leiden on 28 July 1942. However, the capture of *Obfhr* Günther Knöbel and his crew of 9. *Staffel* two nights later was fortuitous as the initial intelligence report revealed:

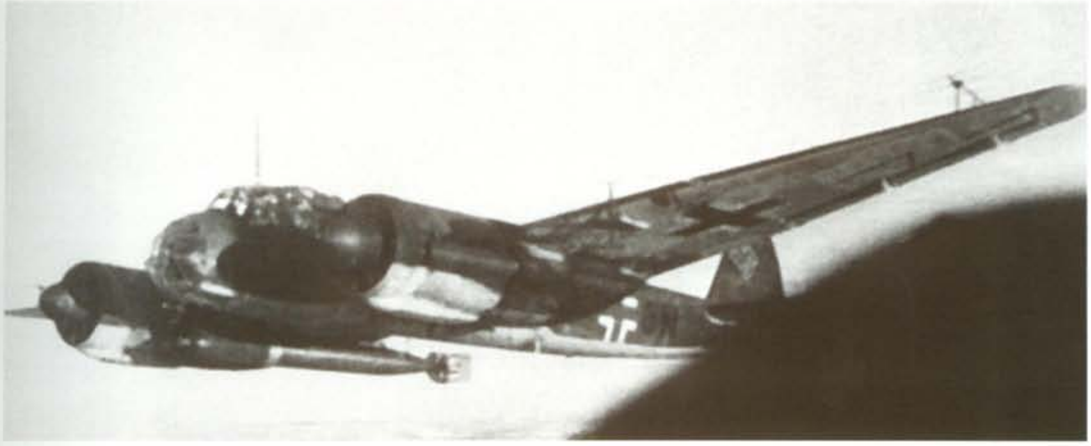
> *"This aircraft started at Rennes at 0130 hours to attack the eastern outskirts of Birmingham....skirted the Scillies and then flew northwards to Cardigan Bay, then turning east to Birmingham. The flight was made at low-level, rising only near the Birmingham balloon barrage.*
>
> *After dropping the bombs, the pilot continued on an easterly course, the intention being to land at Soesterberg. While crossing the coast near Caister at about 50 feet, the aircraft was hit in the tail by AA fire, went out of control and plunged into the sea. The crew somehow managed to scramble out and were all captured unhurt. The unit and aircraft lettering have been obtained from interrogation. POW said that a short time ago the whole of* KGr *506 was renamed III./*KG *26 and transferred from Leeuwarden to Rennes...This crew has been at Rennes about a week and this was their first operational sortie from that base."*

No mention was made in the initial interrogation of torpedo operations but a later report, which combined the interrogations of this crew and of *Lt* Georg Kanmayr's crew captured on 4 July 1942 gave an eight page detailed analysis of torpedo tactics and training in the *Luftwaffe.* The report noted:

> *"There is definite evidence from recently captured POWs of several units that the* Luftwaffe *has become seriously interested in the aircraft torpedo for shipping attacks and that torpedo training is being carried out on a considerably increased scale.*
>
> *"One pointer to the fact that this development is being taken seriously is that* Oberst *Harlinghausen has been appointed* Lufttorpedo Inspizient *Inspector-General (Torpedoes) and has been placed directly under Göring himself..."*

Worryingly for the British the report gave a warning of future operations:

> "KGr *506, which has been renamed III./*KG *26, commenced torpedo training on Ju 88s on 1 May and by the middle of July the whole* Gruppe *had been retrained. They were then transferred to Rennes with the intention of carrying out torpedo attacks on shipping off the south-west coast of England and in the Western Approaches, the Irish Sea and the Bristol Channel.*
>
> *"POW from this unit expected that torpedo attacks in this area could be commenced in the very near future and made special reference to shipping plying between Plymouth and the Bristol Channel ports. The unit is also at readiness to make torpedo attacks on troopships, port etc in the event of an attempted invasion of France..."*

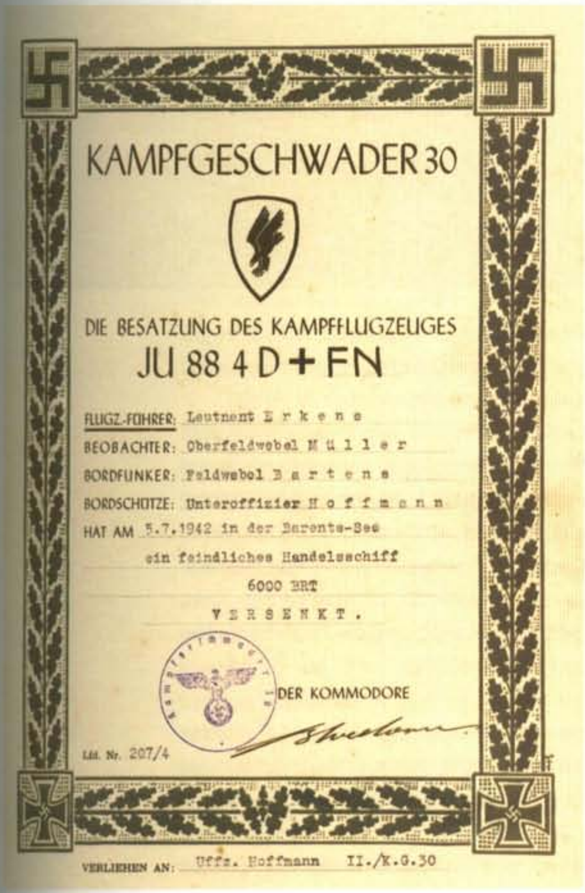


LEFT: A Ju 88 A-17 with only one LT F5b torpedo on the starboard inner rack formates with a sister aircraft. Note what appears to be an alternative mounting of the FuG 200 Hohentwiel radar on this aircraft. Instead of the conventional nose mounting there are dipoles outboard of the port engine and the more conventionally mounted on the upper wing tips.

BELOW: The certificate awarded to Lt Willi Erkens and his crew of 5./KG 30 for sinking one of the freighters from PQ 17 on 5 July 1942 which had made it as far as the Barents Sea. The certificate is signed by the Kommodore, Obstlt Erich Bloedorn.

That attack came four nights later as another report stated:

> *"At 2353 hours BMT on 3 August 1942, the Master of the largest vessel in a small merchant convoy bound from Portsmouth to Milford Haven heard the sound of aircraft approaching from the south. The moon was not yet up and no aircraft could be seen but their presence was confirmed by the escort. There was no sound of E-boat engines. 15 minutes later, a gunner thought he saw an aircraft and opened fire. Almost immediately afterwards the ship was struck by a torpedo which wrecked the engine room. Subsequent examination showed that a second torpedo had entered the ship, apparently through the hole made by the first, but had not exploded possibly because the explosion of the first torpedo had injured the mechanism. The ship was towed into Plymouth with a large hole in the side."*



KAMPFGESCHWADER 30

DIE BESATZUNG DES KAMPFFLUGZEUGES
JU 88 4 D + FN

FLUGZ.-FÜHRER: Leutnant Erkens
BEOBACHTER: Oberfeldwebel Müller
BORDFUNKER: Feldwebel Bartens
BORDSCHÜTZE: Unteroffizier Hoffmann
HAT AM 5.7.1942 in der Barents-See
ein feindliches Handelsschiff
6000 BRT
VERSENKT.

DER KOMMODORE

Lfd. Nr. 207/4

VERLIEHEN AN: Uffz. Hoffmann II./K.G.30

This attack was carried out by 11 aircraft from III./KG 26, now led by *Hptm* Ernst-Günther Möller since *Hptm* Thomsen had been badly injured in an accident on 21 July 1942.[3] They claimed to have sunk or damaged six ships totalling 20,000 BRT but the only casualty was the 5,841 BRT *El Ciervo* which was the ship torpedoed 13 kms off Start Point. It is possible that a second attack against a convoy was unsuccessfully attempted the following night and shortly afterwards, III./KG 26 transferred to Banak in northern Norway. For the moment, the scene of battle was again concentrated on northern Norway and the Mediterranean.

There would be one more series of attacks against Arctic convoys before the end of 1942 and as with the end of 1941, it was the presence of escort carriers that made the difference. On 2 September 1942, convoy PQ 18 left Loch Ewe in Scotland with over 40 merchantmen. Mindful of what had happened to PQ 17, this time the escort was different. Close escort was provided by 17 warships and the escort carrier *Avenger* with her escort of two destroyers. A further two forces were in support; close cover was given by the AA cruiser *Scylla*, with 16 destroyers and three cruisers. Distant cover was provided by the battleships *Anson* and *Duke of York*, a light cruiser and destroyers to the north-east of Iceland. Added to the submarine patrols were a total of 40 major warships preparing to take on the *Kriegsmarine* and the *Luftwaffe*.

The *Luftwaffe* forces facing PQ 18 were in the region of 15 Heinkel 115s of 1./406 and 1./906 at Sorresia and Billefjord respectively, 46 Heinkel 111s of I./KG 26 at Bardufoss and Banak, and

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[3] The Messerschmitt 108 he was flying crashed in an accident at Angers, injuring him, *Oblt* Peter Bethge and Uffz Werner Meyer.

RIGHT: A dramatic photograph, taken from Junkers Ju 88 coded 4D+FN flown by Lt Willi Erkens, of the 6,000 BRT freighter they sank in the Barents Sea on 5 July 1942.

27 Junkers 88s of III./KG 26, all of which were torpedo capable. Added to this were a further 60 Junkers 88s from KG 30 at Banak and 30 Junkers 87s of I./*StG* 5 at Kirkenes. There were also Focke-Wulf 200s from I./KG 40 available for long-range reconnaissance and attack.

The convoy was first located to the north of Iceland on 8 September but it was not until 13 September that the first attacks materialised. It was left to *Obstlt* Erich Bloedorn's Junkers 88s of KG 30 to split and distract the defences, which would allow 26 Heinkel 111s from *Maj* Werner Klümper's I./KG 26 and 17 Junkers 88s from III./KG 26 led by *Hptm* Klaus Nocken of 7./KG 26 to carry out a torpedo attack, whilst 17 Junkers 88s from I./KG 30 would carry out conventional attacks. This first attack saw for the first time what was called the '*Golden Zange*'[4] tactic of flying at sea-level: extended line abreast, approaching the convoy from directly abeam, the formation 'combing' the convoy. These tactics are best described in an earlier intelligence report:

> *"The feature of torpedo tactics on which the* Luftwaffe *lays most stress is the value of the mass attack, especially on convoys and escorted capital ships, on the principle that if enough torpedoes are released, some at least are bound to find their mark.*
>
> *"It is considered essential to attack from several directions at once in order to counter any evasive action. Furthermore, the attack must be so organised that all torpedoes are released as nearly simultaneously as possible. Another major point of German tactics is that units are being taught to approach their target at sea-level, rising to 45 metres for the actual release… A third feature is the combined use of torpedo aircraft and dive-bombers according to a carefully synchronized programme.*

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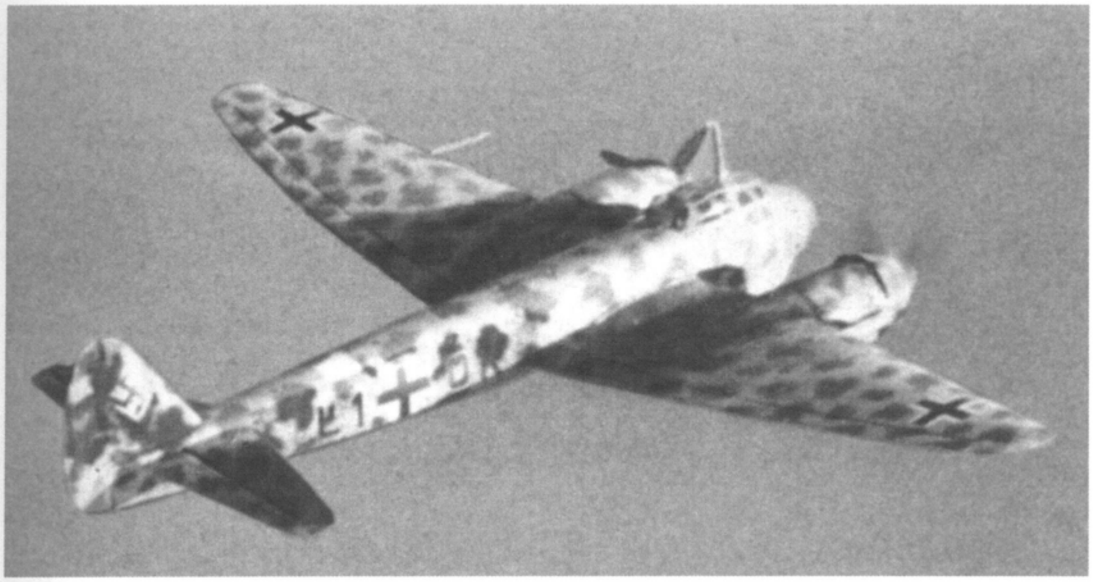
[4] Literally Golden Pincers.



RIGHT: This Ju 88 A-4/Trop, coded L1+OK of 2./LG 1, with its port engine feathered was used in operations over the Mediterranean from its base in Sicily. The aircraft had its uppersurfaces painted in RLM 79 light sand-yellow with RLM 80 patches sprayed on top. The undersides were retained in RLM 65. The aircraft code L1+K was painted in black with the letter '0' in RLM 23 red thinly outlined in white. The white Mediterranean Theatre fuselage band has been largely overpainted with just a small portion being retained on the top of the fuselage above the number '1'.

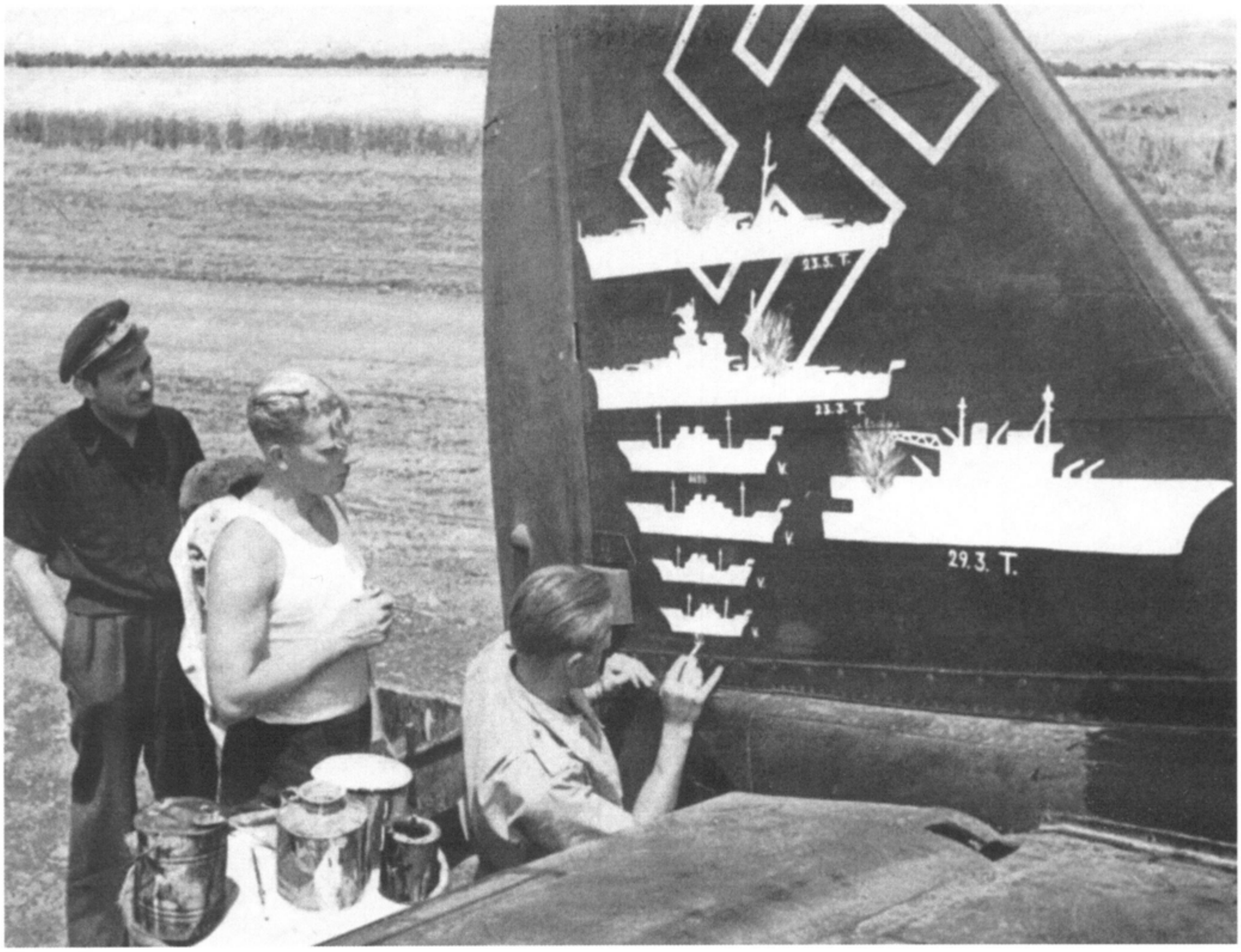
> *"The intention is to send in dive-bombers before the torpedo attack in order to throw the convoy into confusion and distract the attention of the defences...The tactics of torpedo aircraft are as follows. A major attack by a whole* Gruppe *takes place in two waves, the first one minute after the dive-bombers and the second two minutes after the first. The aircraft approach the convoy head-on at sea-level in shallow vic and when nearing the convoy, change formation first into line abreast and then on an R/T signal from the leader, they then turn into attack, each singling out its own target...The port torpedo is released first...as soon as both torpedoes have been released, the aircraft makes a steep climbing turn and then dives down to sea-level..."*

PQ 18 was already prepared for the attacks but still eight freighters were hit, all either sinking immediately or later being sunk by their escorts. A follow-up attack later in the afternoon by 1./406 was ineffective, thanks to the weather, whilst further minor attacks that evening resulted in the shooting down of a defending Hurricane and two Heinkel 115s. The next day, concerted attacks by U-boats, bombers and torpedo aircraft were launched, the main target being the carrier *Avenger*. Again, the defences were alerted and the carrier was spotted too late for an effective attack by III./KG 26. The next attack occurred just after lunchtime, quickly followed by another torpedo attack by I./KG 26 together with Junkers 88s from *Maj* Werner Baumbach's III./KG 30; just one freighter was sunk.

BELOW: Werner Baumbach (left) of III./KG 30 was an accomplished anti-shipping pilot as evidenced by his award of the Ritterkreuz along with Oblt Helmut Weinreich who was Staffel Kapitän of 7./KG 30. Weinreich was awarded the Ritterkreuz on 22 January 1943.

From then on, the attacks were generally ineffective, not helped by poor weather. Of the 40 original ships, 27 reached Archangel on 17 September but were still subject to air attacks until 20 September; just one freighter was hit but this time, she was successfully beached and her cargo saved. Of the 13 sunk by enemy action, 10 were credited to aircraft, and three to U-boats. PQ 18 proved to be the high point of the *Luftwaffe's* torpedo operations; never again would so many aircraft be thrown against a single target. It also was a low point in respect of the aircraft and trained crews lost; 44 aircraft were shot down, of which 38 were torpedo aircraft. From KG 26's viewpoint, they lost 57 aircrew killed or missing, losses that would seriously hamper any future operations. However, as with the carrier *Audacity*'s impact in 1941, the impact of *Avenger* and her aircraft in 1942 was similarly important for future Arctic convoys and the potency of the *Luftwaffe*.

On 26 September 1942, convoy QP 14 arrived at Loch Ewe having lost three freighters, a destroyer and a minesweeper to U-boats; the *Luftwaffe* had no impact on this convoy at all, it was still licking its wounds post PQ 18. No further major convoys would occur until December 1942 and even then, the convoys, JW 51A and B were not attacked by aircraft, even if JW 51B provoked what would later be



ABOVE: A Ju 88 of 7./KG 30, coded 4D+MR in the process of having some silhouettes touched up to denote anti-shipping operations. The three large silhouettes appear to be naval vessels with the larger on the right being an aircraft carrier. The three naval vessels even have bomb bursts painted in. The remaining four vessels appear to be merchant ships. Note the Italian officer on the left.

called the Battle of the Barents Sea. Finally for 1942, the scene of battle switched yet again to the Mediterranean where, together with the southern Atlantic, the focus of the *Luftwaffe's* anti-shipping operations remained until mid-1944.

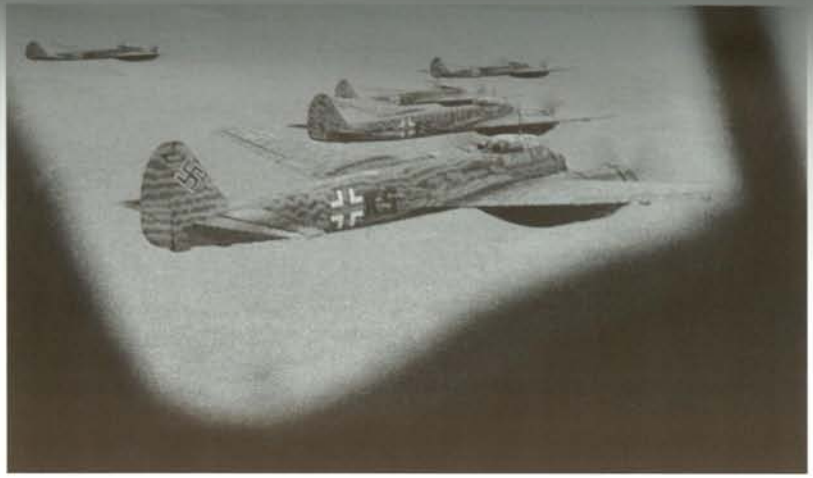
Operation *Pedestal* in August 1942 was the last major convoy consisting of 13 freighters and a tanker attempting to bring much needed supplies to Malta. As with PQ 18, the escort was massive totalling four carriers, two battleships, seven cruisers and 24 destroyers.

Things began badly when on 10 August 1942, U-73 sank the carrier *Eagle* and with it nearly 25 percent of the fighter aircraft needed to protect the convoy. Then, on the evening of 11 August, there was a concerted attack by 30 conventional Junkers 88s and six Heinkel 111s of the experienced torpedo unit 6/KG 26 which had recently moved from Saki in the Crimea to Grosseto. No hits were scored and a Junkers 88 of 1./KGr 806, this unit on one of its last missions before being designated III./KG 54, was lost. The next day, the attacks continued as pilot *Uffz* Adolf Hoffmann of 3./KG 54, recorded in his diary:

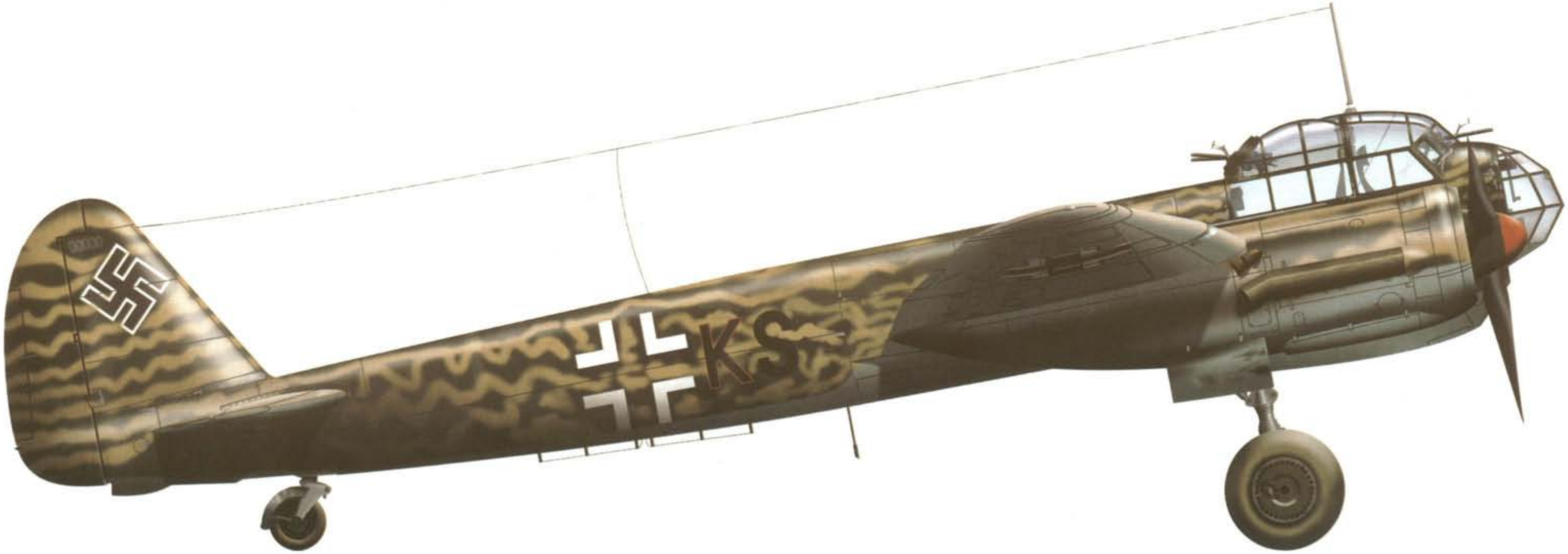
> *"Attack on large English/American convoy consisting 4 aircraft carriers, 3 warships, 21 freighters and 20 destroyers/cruisers. First attack by 18 aircraft. Heavy flak and lots of fighters. Freighter hit. One of the warships was shooting with its heavy guns. Very heavy defences. 2043 hours sunset attack... one ship exploded into the skies, another six burning. Terrific Flak. Landed 2230 hours - enemy night fighter over the airfield."*

Attacks that day were carried included such units as I. and II./LG 1, 6./KG 26, I./KG 54, KG 77, KGr 806 and Stukas from I./StG 3, the latter unit badly damaging the carrier *Indomitable.* Two freighters were abandoned and a third, the *Deucalion*, exploded, as witnessed by Adolf Hoffmann.

Still under attack by both the *Luftwaffe* and *Regia Aeronautica*, by 15 August the last ship, the tanker *Ohio*, laden with vital aviation fuel, limped into Grand Harbour. Four other freighters had preceded her and despite the loss of another nine ships, the supplies they brought were crucial and



LEFT: A group of six Ju 88 A-4s of 8./KG 77 flying over the Mediterranean, appear to be returning from a mission as no external bombs are visible. The aircraft codes are visible, the nearest being 'KS' with the next 'FS' and the third 'ES'. The application of this camouflage pattern was found to be most effective when flying over water.



Junkers Ju 88 A-4s of 8./KG 77

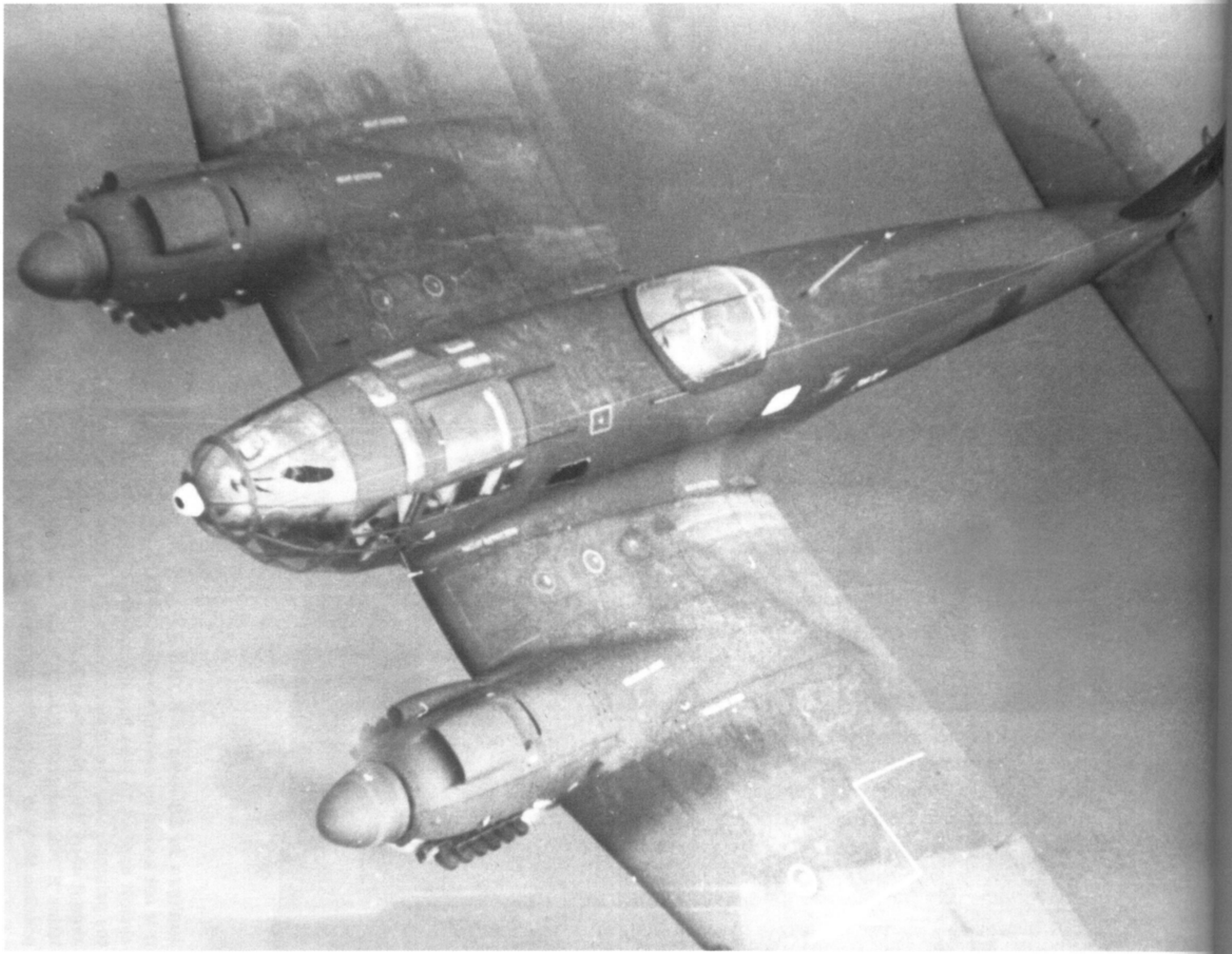
It is not known for certain whether the RLM 79 pattern was applied over the splinter pattern of RLM 70/71, although it is likely. Each aircraft appears to have had the random snaking lines of RLM 79 light sand-yellow painted in various patterns, presumably at the whim of the painters, over the uppersurfaces. The German term for this kind of application was called 'Arabesken' (Arabesque). None of the aircraft carry the unit code of 3Z or the white Mediterranean Theatre band around the fuselage as they had been overpainted. The Staffel letter 'S' was painted in black, as was the individual aircraft letter 'K' which was thinly outlined in red, the Staffel colour. It is also possible that the spinner tips may have been painted in red.

signified a turning point in the Mediterranean maritime war. Malta could continue to defend herself and to go on the offensive, something witnessed by *Uffz* Adolf Hoffmann[5] in his diary entry for 21 August when, whilst on a search for enemy submarines off Corfu, he witnessed an RAF torpedo attack on an Axis tanker which was hit in the bows and began losing oil.

The months that followed were much quieter until the start of November 1942 when all of KG 26 found itself operating from Grosseto and III./KG 30 found itself operating from Comiso as a result of Operation *Torch*, the Allied invasion of Algeria. A number of crews from KSG 2, some experienced and others just finishing their training, were also attached to KG 26 which caused some confusion and interest to their captors after a number were shot down and captured. Although a number of ships were damaged or sunk, notable *Luftwaffe* losses during the invasion were *Hptm* Karl Barth, *Kommandeur* of II./KG 26 who had been awarded the *Ritterkreuz* on 14 December 1940 for anti-shipping operations with 3/506, and the *Kommandeur* of III./KG 26, *Hptm* Klaus Nocken. The latter was rescued and would be awarded the *Ritterkreuz* a year later.

For the remainder of the year, KG 26 and the existing *Kampfgeschwadern* maintained their sights on both Malta and the increasing convoys that now transited the Mediterranean. However, it was now clear that the tide was starting to turn in that region and that any sinkings had little adverse effect on the Anglo-American forces now very much on the offensive; 1943 would see this trend continue.

BELOW: An interesting and rare overhead view of a Heinkel He 111 H series in flight. In particular note the mounting for the MG FF cannon as used by anti-shipping units. The aircraft carries the typical factory applied splinter pattern in RLM 70/71 with wing walkway and access points clearly visible. Note the fuselage Balkenkreuz has been painted black.



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[5] Adolf Hoffmann would fall victim to one of these night fighters on 17 October 1942 when he was shot down over Catania airfield by Fg Off Charles Crombie of 89 Squadron; he and two other members of his crew died in the crash.

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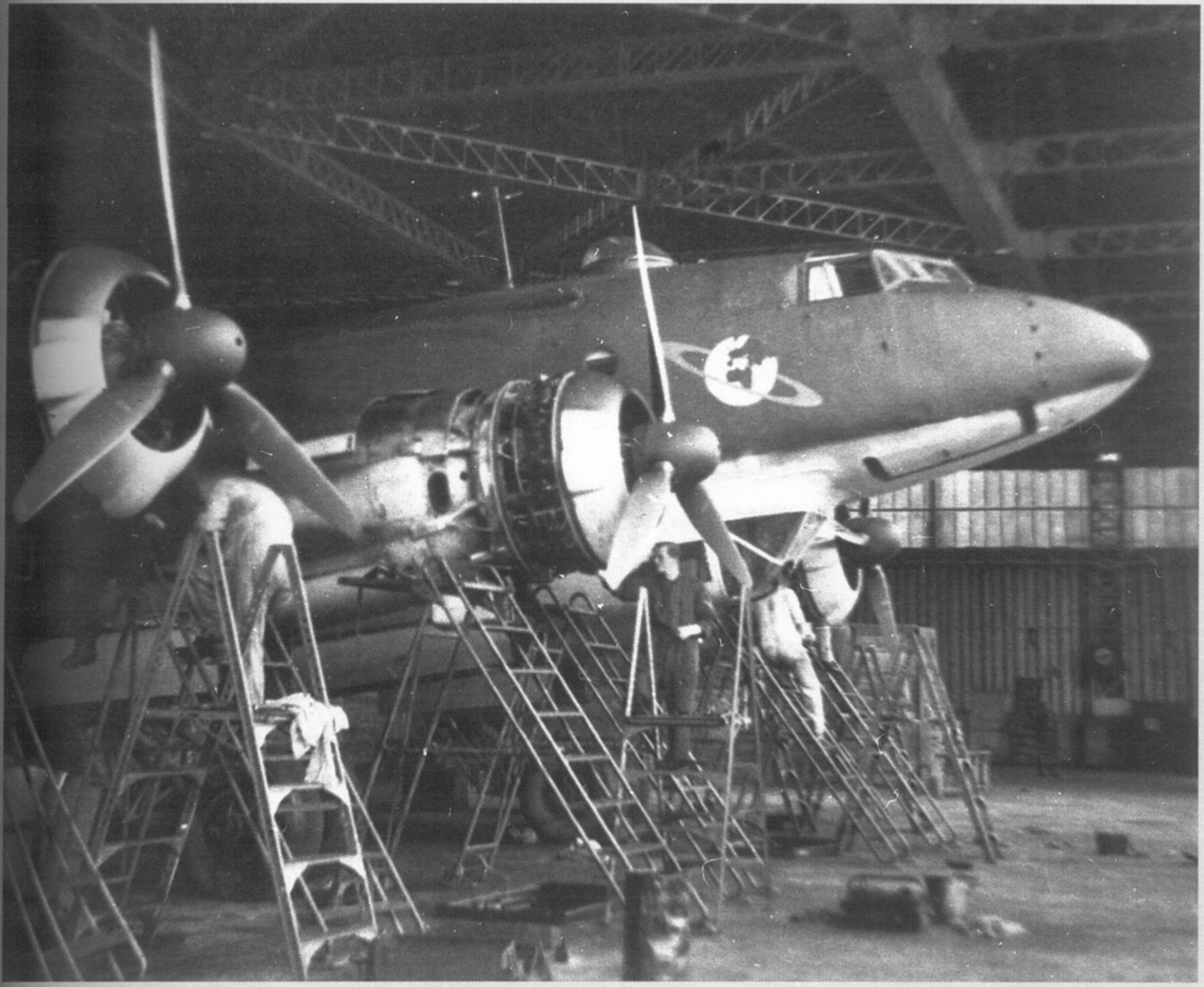
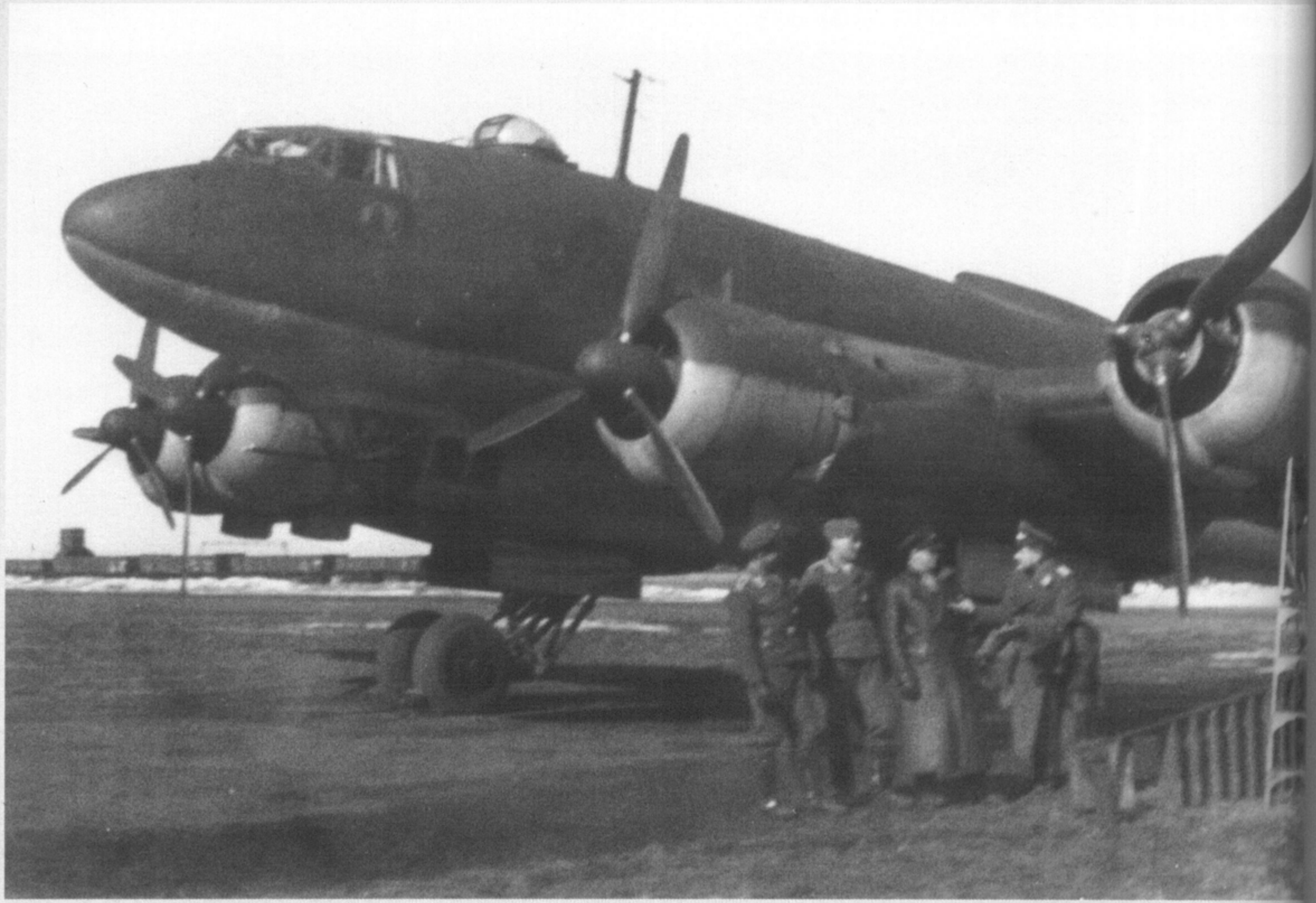
Focke-Wulf Fw 200 Photo Gallery

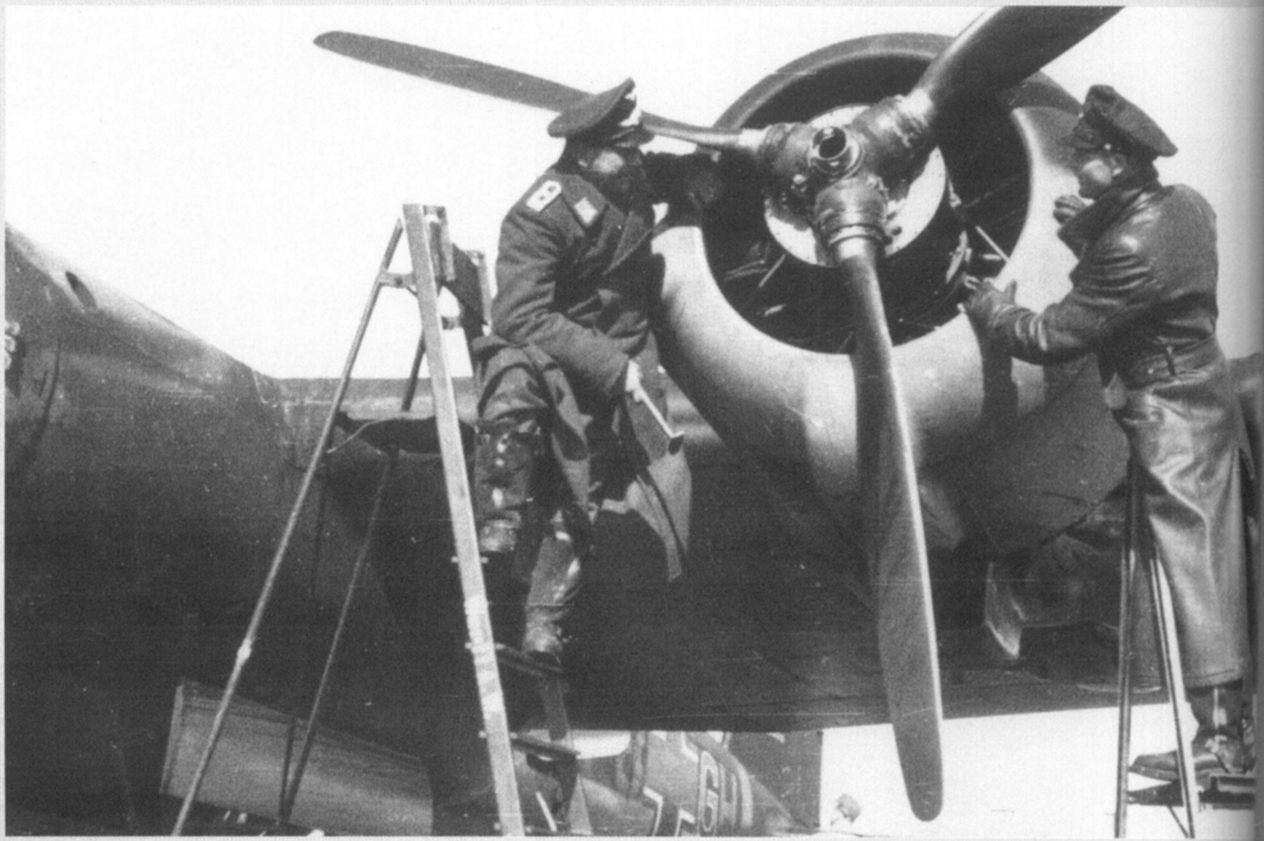


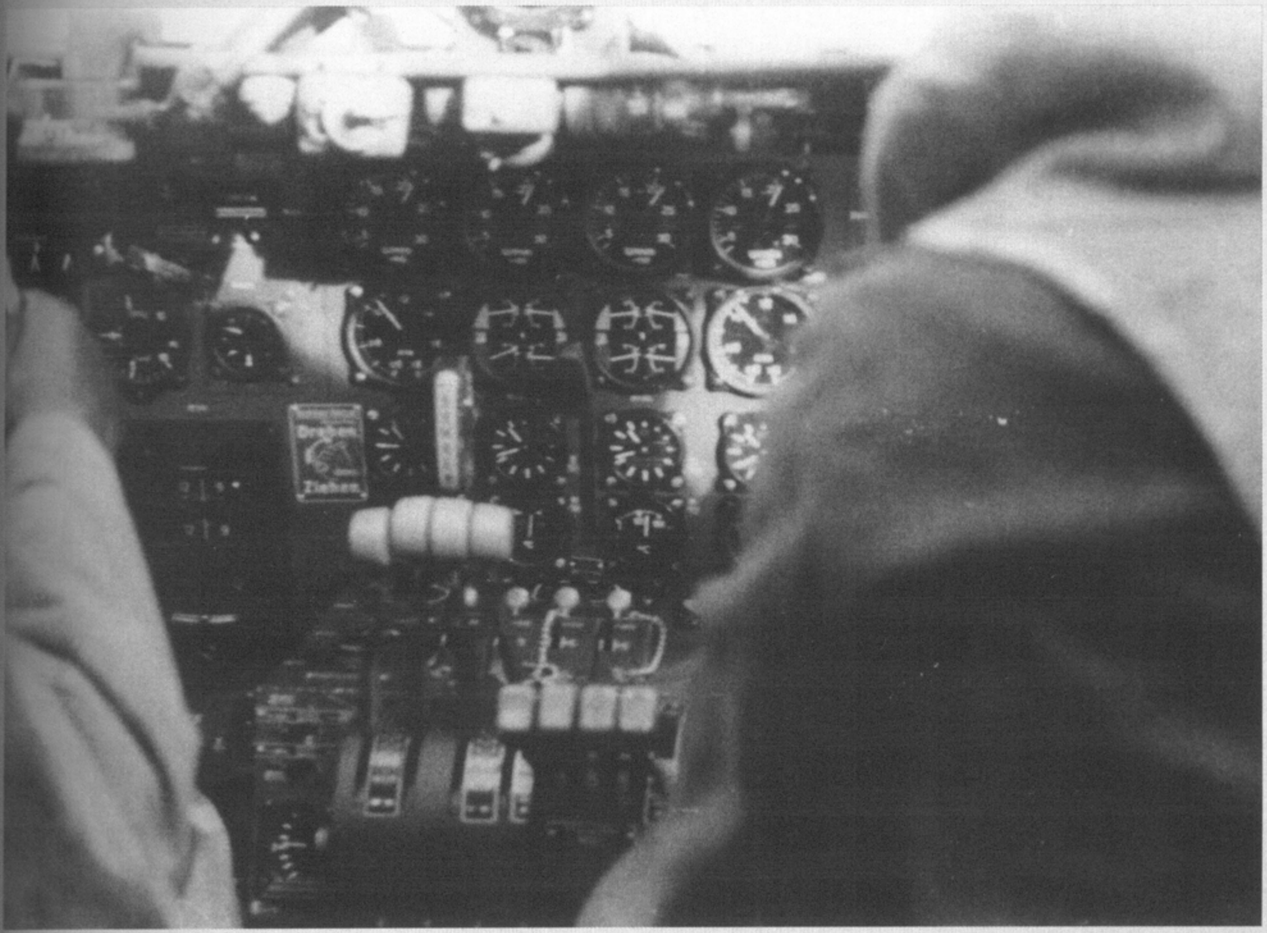
ABOVE: An Fw 200 C-3 undergoing engine maintenance on its four BMW-Bramo 323R-2 Fafnir nine-cylinder radial engines at Bordeaux-Merignac. Rated at 1,000 hp at sea level and 1,200 hp at take-off with the aid of methanol-water injection, the C-3 model offered much improved performance over previous sub-types.

LEFT: The crew entry door on a 7./KG 40 Condor betrays its airliner origins.

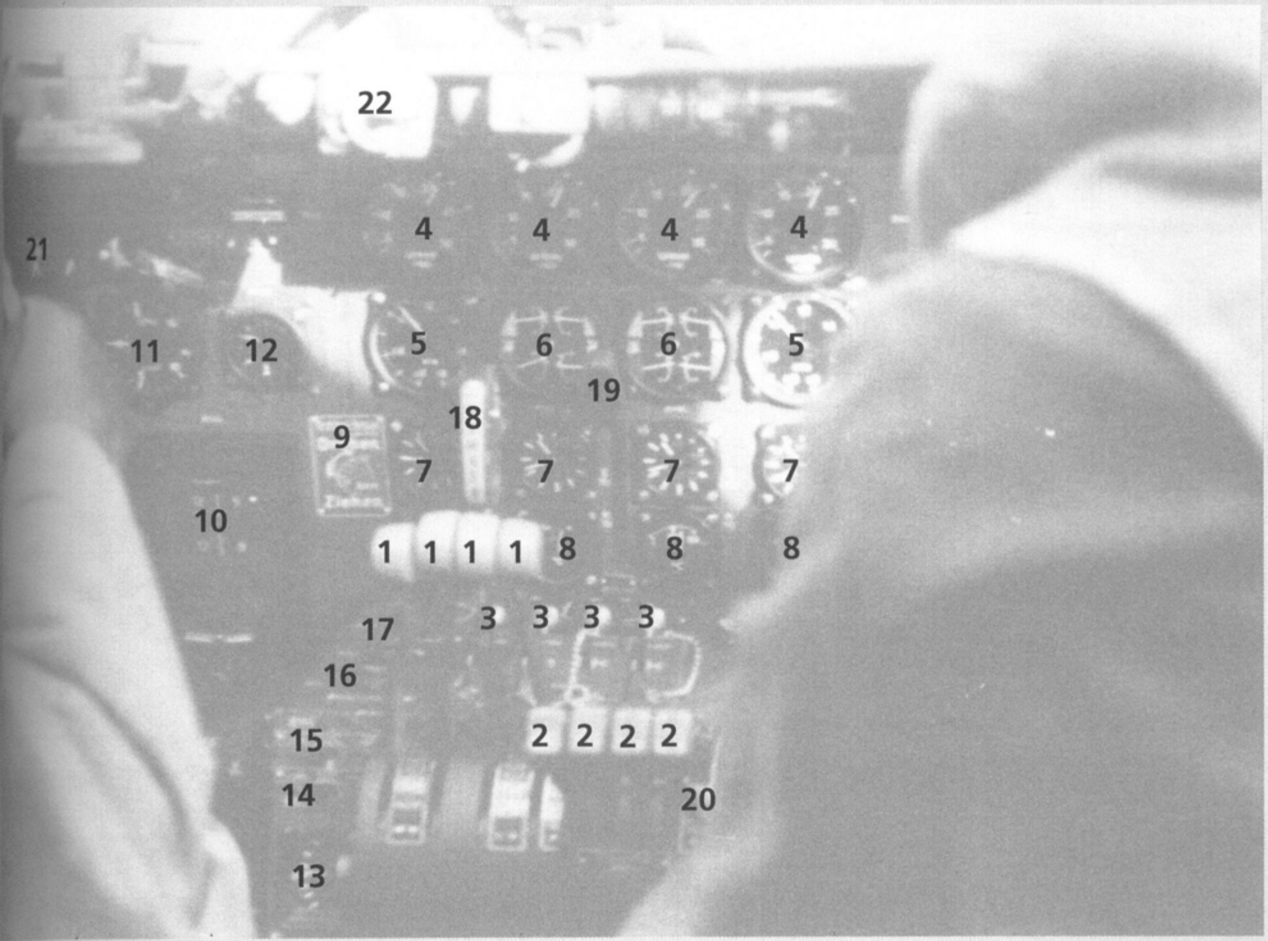


ABOVE AND RIGHT:
Fw 200 C-3 W.Nr. 0074, coded F8+GH of 1./KG 40 seen at Aalborg, March 1941. The spinnerless port outer BMW-Bramo 323R-2 Fafnir nine-cylinder radial engine seems of interest to the two flight crew, one of whom is holding a hammer-like tool.



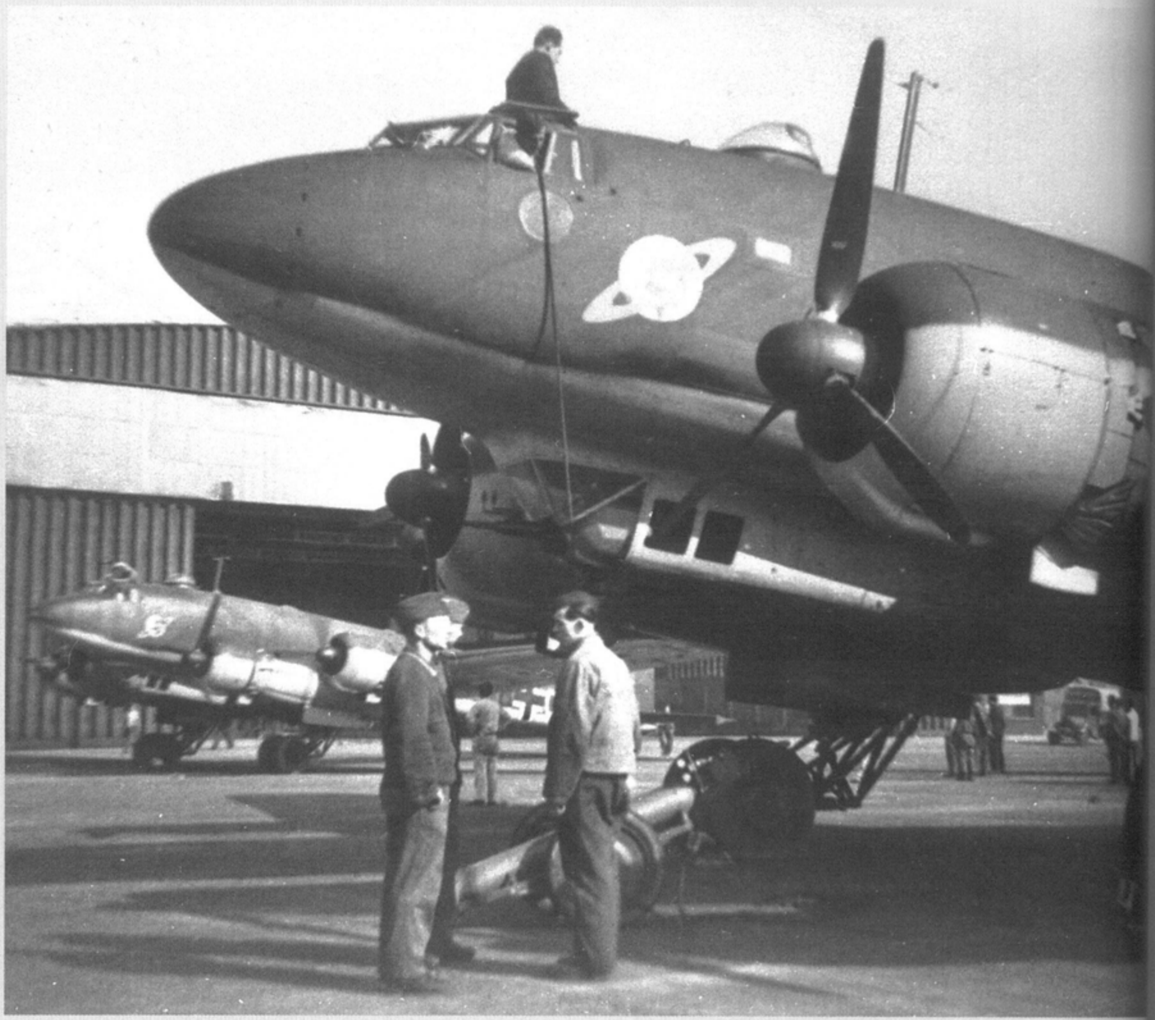


LEFT: Cockpit of a Condor of KG 40 in flight. Note the throttle controls and the bank of engine instruments forward of these. See below for key to visible instruments and controls.

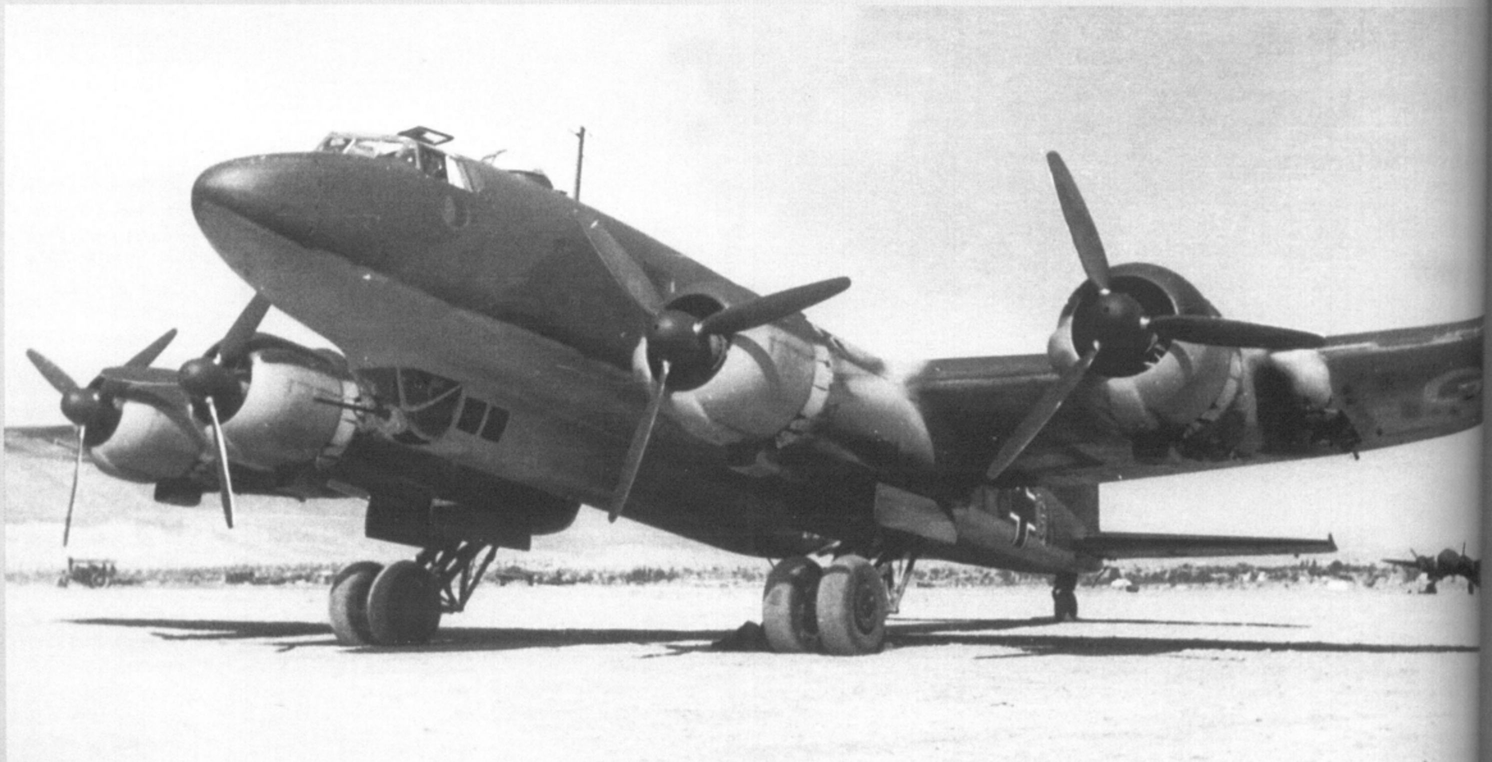


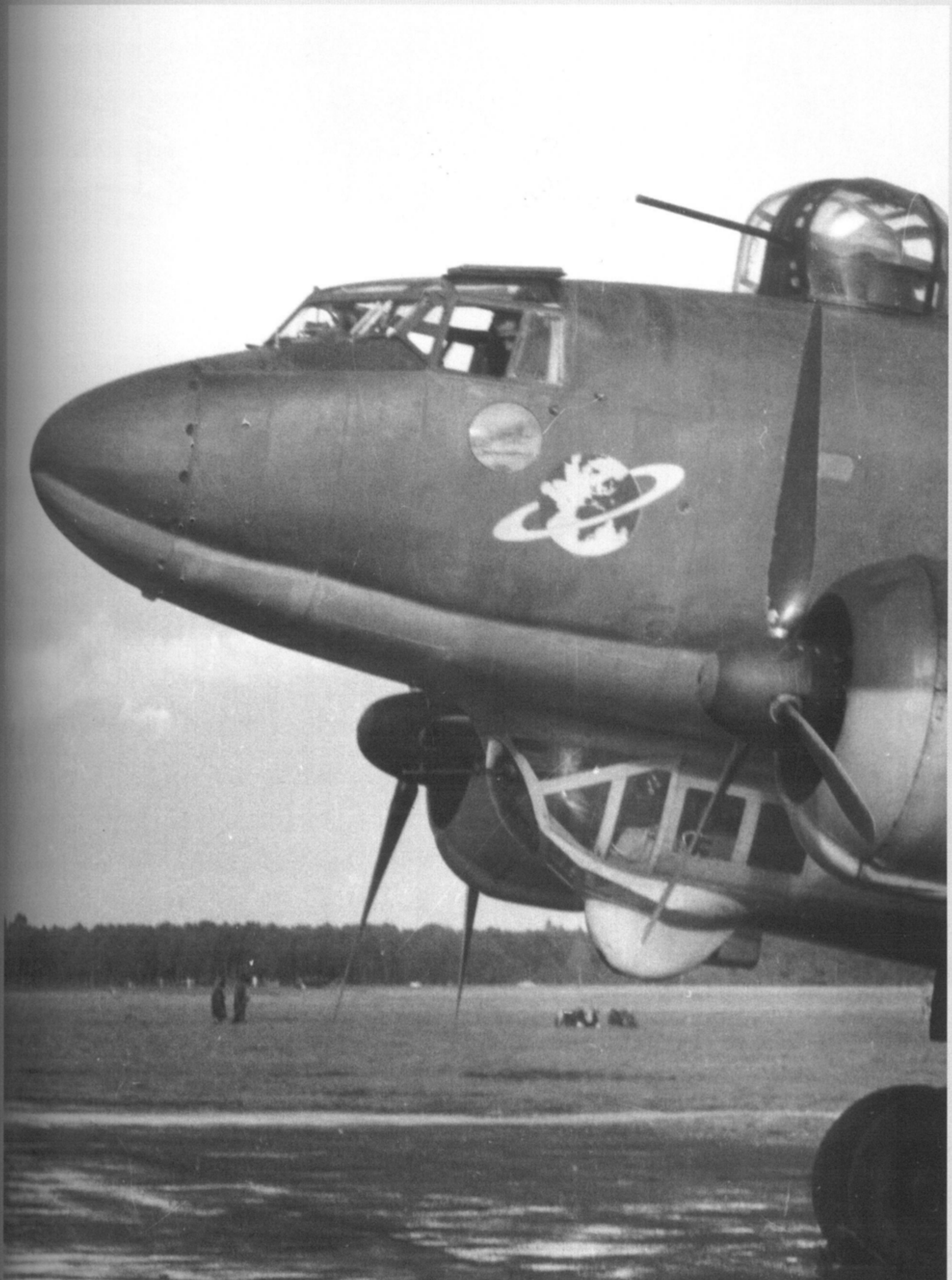
LEFT: Key:
1 Engine throttles
2 Supercharger levers
3 Ignition switches, (four switches) two for port and two for starboard
4 Rev counters
5 Double manifold pressure gauges (port and starboard engines)
6 Fuel and oil pressure gauges (port and starboard engines)
7 Pitch indicators
8 Oil temperature gauges (the fourth is hidden by the engine throttles)
9 Instruction notice for emergency rudder control lever
10 Gyro Compass
11 Rate-of-climb indicator
12 Radio beacon (Navaid) visual indicator
13 Longitudal trim indicator
14 Directional trim emergency switch
15 Longitudal trim emergency switch
16 Servo unit emergency button
17 Master battery cut-off switch
18 Emergency bomb release (sealed)
19 Bomb-arming lever
20 One of two fuel tank selectors
21 Gyro-compass course indicator
22 Auxilary lighting switch

RIGHT: Fw 200 C-3 Condors of KG 40 at Bordeaux-Merignac undergoing maintenance and engine checks.

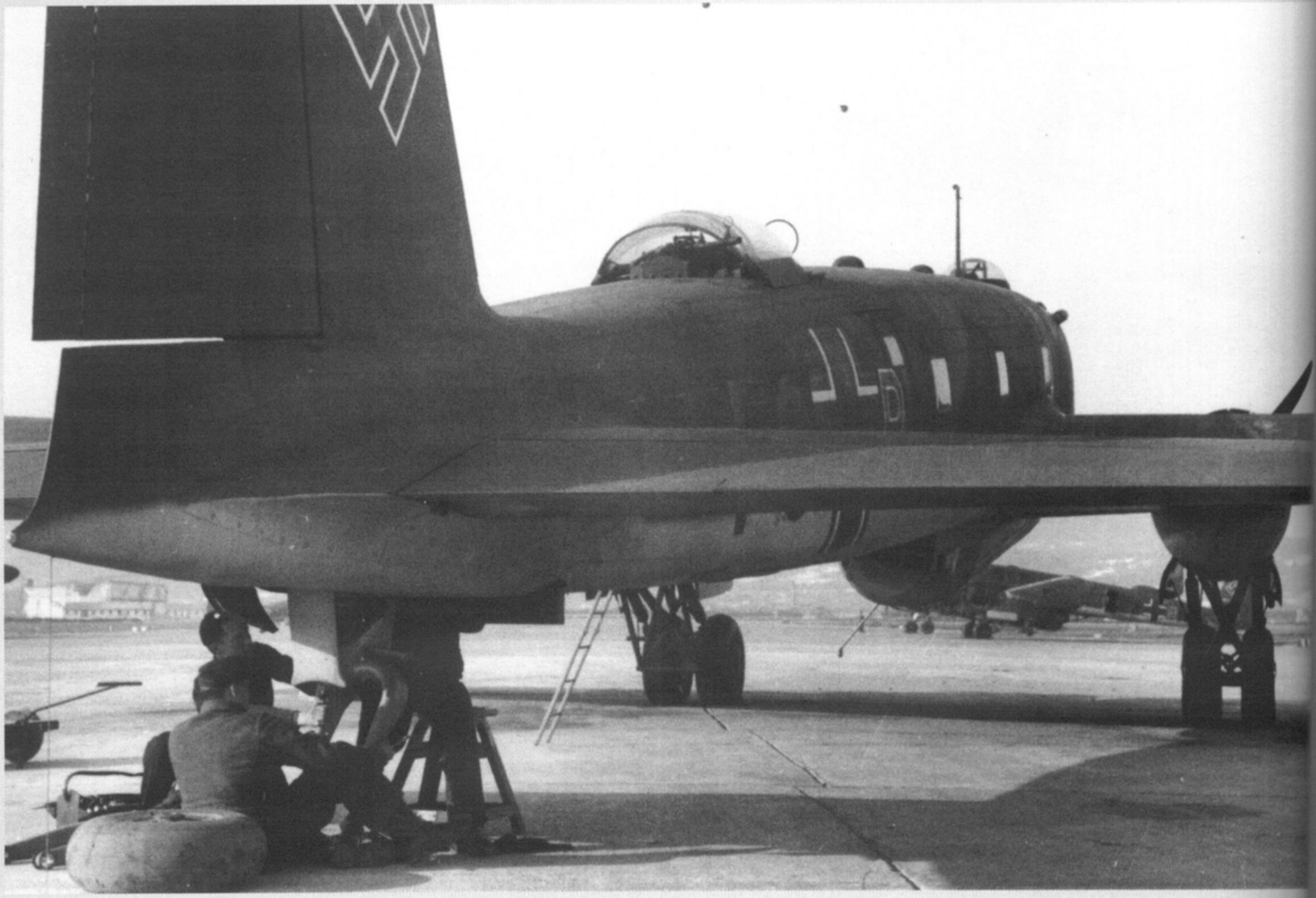


BELOW: An Fw 200 C-3 of 1./KG 40 carries the camouflage scheme of the 1941/42 period with its unit marking, F8+GH painted on both sides of the fuselage and repeated beneath the wings. The Geschwader code 'F8' appeared below the port wing in black while the individual aircraft letter 'G' and Staffel letter 'H' were applied beneath the starboard wing in white and black respectively. The individual letter painted on the sides of the fuselage was outlined in white.

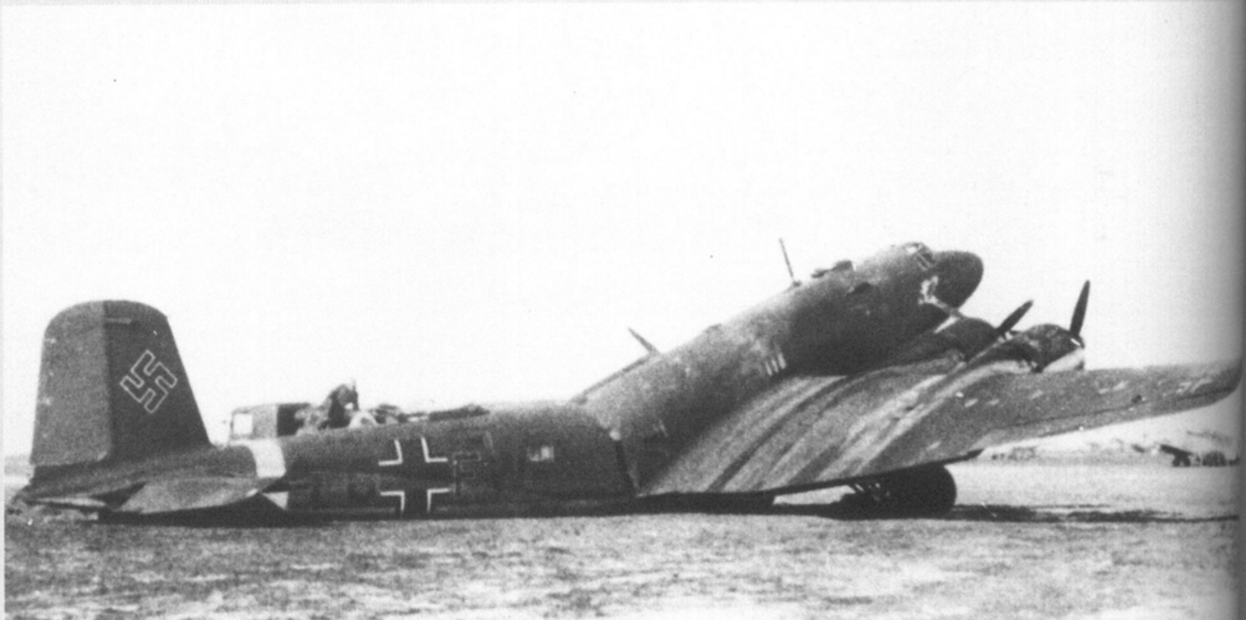




LEFT: The forward fuselage of a Fw 200 C-4 Condor shows the distinguishing features of this much-produced model: namely the upper dorsal hydraulically-operated HDL 151 turret housing a single 15-mm MG 151 cannon with a 500-round belt with a spare 300-round belt. Although the increase in fire power was appreciated, it did come with a penalty, notably a reduction in top speed by 26-29 k/ph (not all C-4s were fitted with this turret - some reverted to the earlier Fw 19 type). The other distinguishing feature is the Lotfe 7D bombsight, which considerably improved the Condor's bombing accuracy. Also of note is the redesigned and more streamlined glazing in the ventral gondola - first seen in some C-3 Condors.



ABOVE: Major Edgar Petersen acquired the first Condors for his specialist long-range anti-shipping unit later to be known as 1./KG 40. This example undergoing a tail wheel change has the early type Balkenkreuz with the aircraft's individual letter 'B' painted in red and outlined in white.



ABOVE: This Fw 200 C-4, W.Nr. 0141, coded F8+FW of 12.(Erg)/KG 40 probably photographed at Vaernes 21 August 1942, was diverted its anti-shipping operations and pressed into service during airlift operations. The Condor's 'Achilles Heel' was the haste to which it had adapted for continuous operations and the strain imposed on the airframe. Embodying virtually no structural strengthening, it soon prove inadequate in operational service. There were numerous examples of the rear spar failing with the fuselage breaking just aft of the trailing edge of the wing - as evidenced above on a hard landing. These structural problems were continually to blight the Condor during its operational career.

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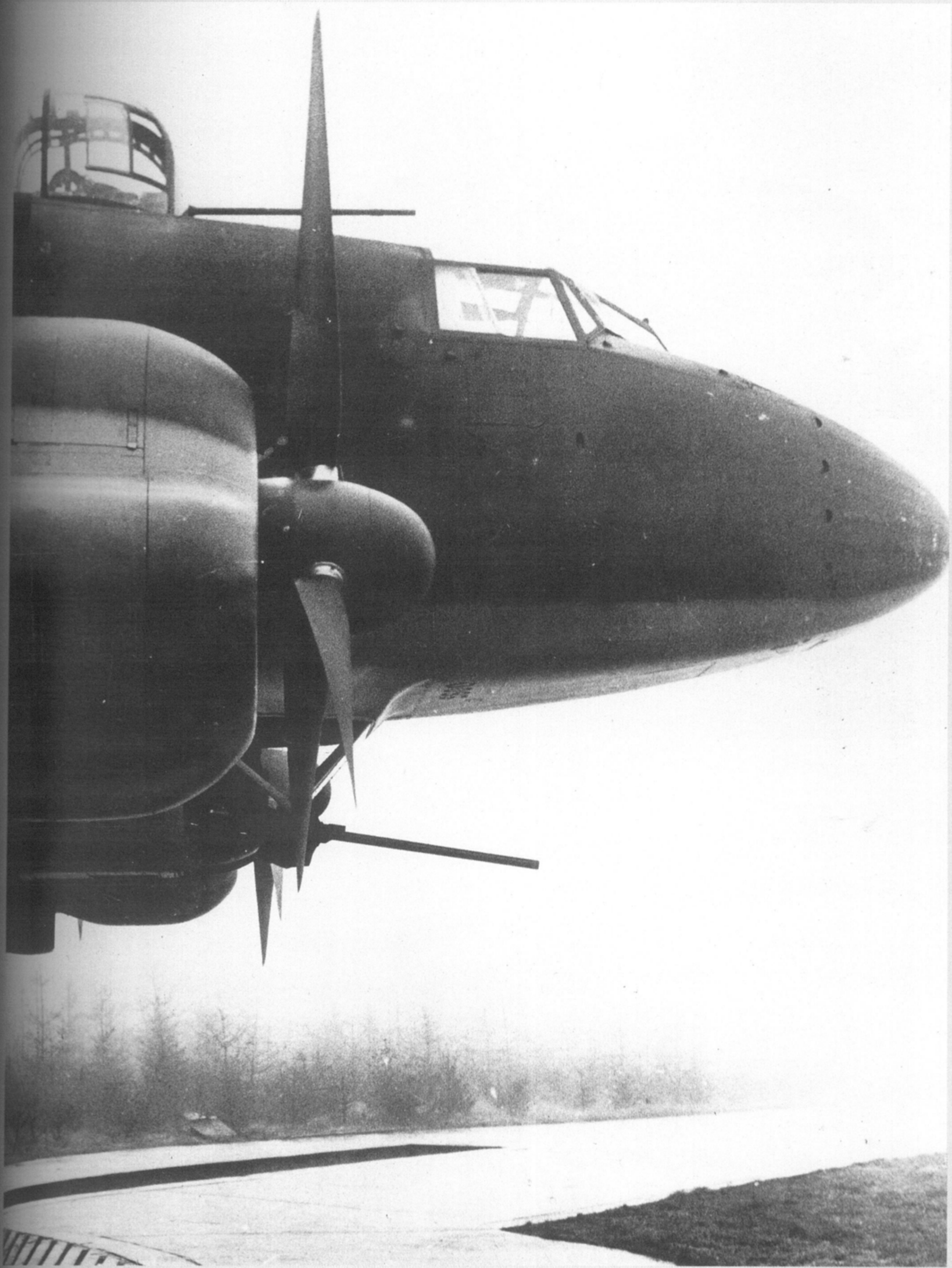
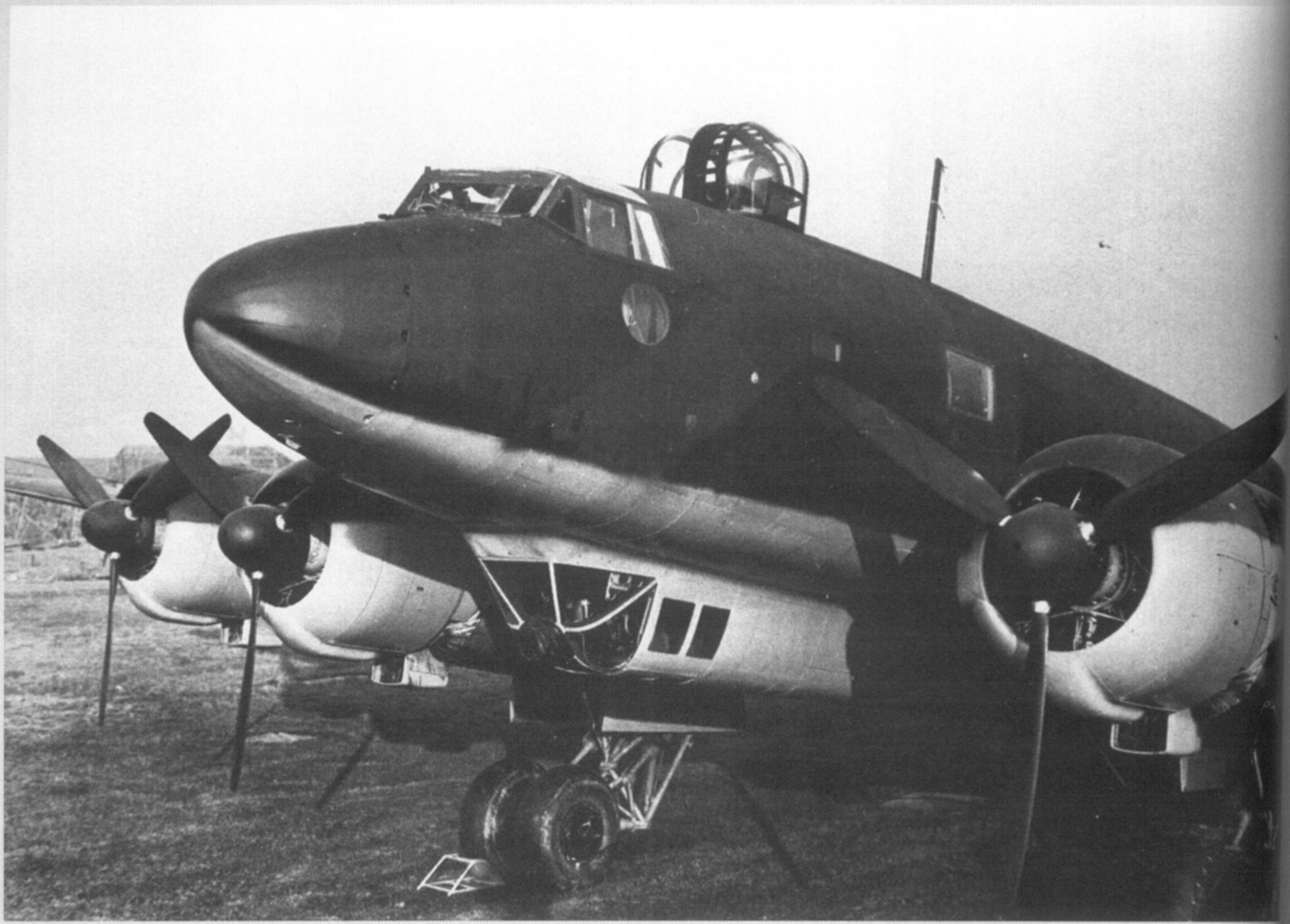
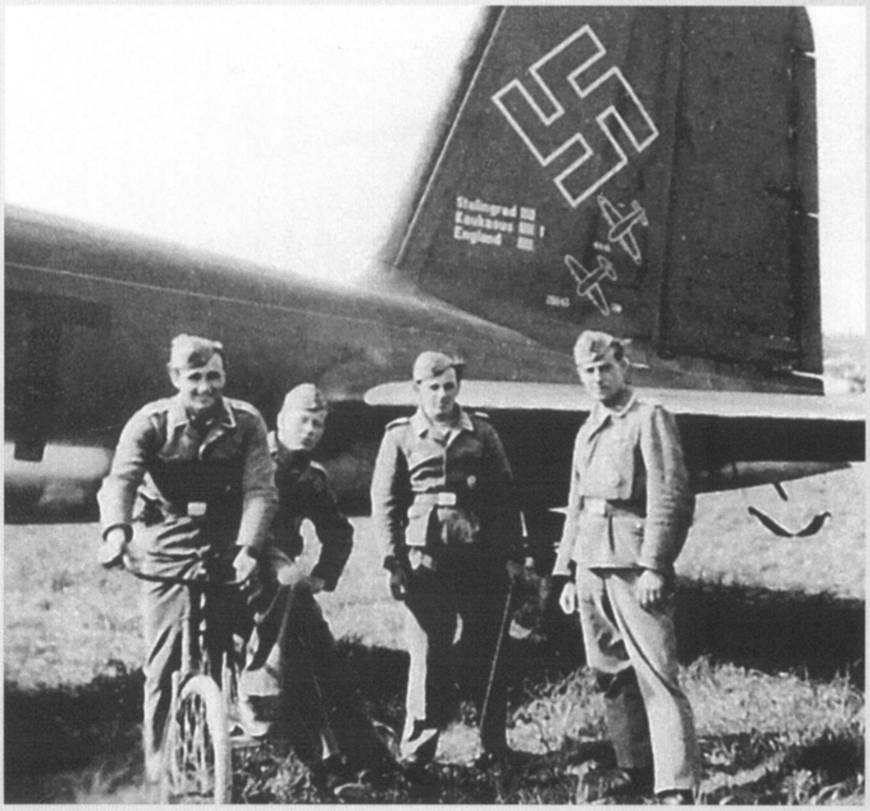


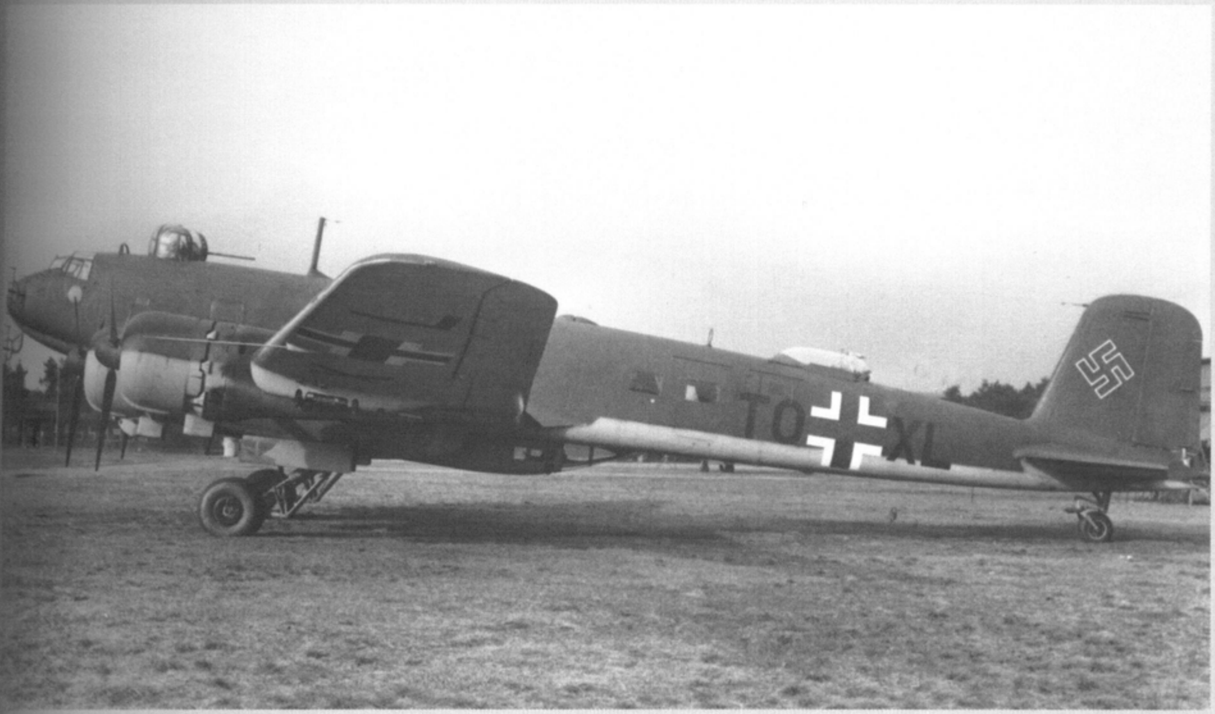
ABOVE: This Fw 200 C-3 or early C-4, features the improved armament introduced on these models - notably the forward dorsal hydraulically-operated HDL 151 turret housing a single 15 mm MG 151 cannon and another with a 300-round belt in the nose of the early style ventral gondola.

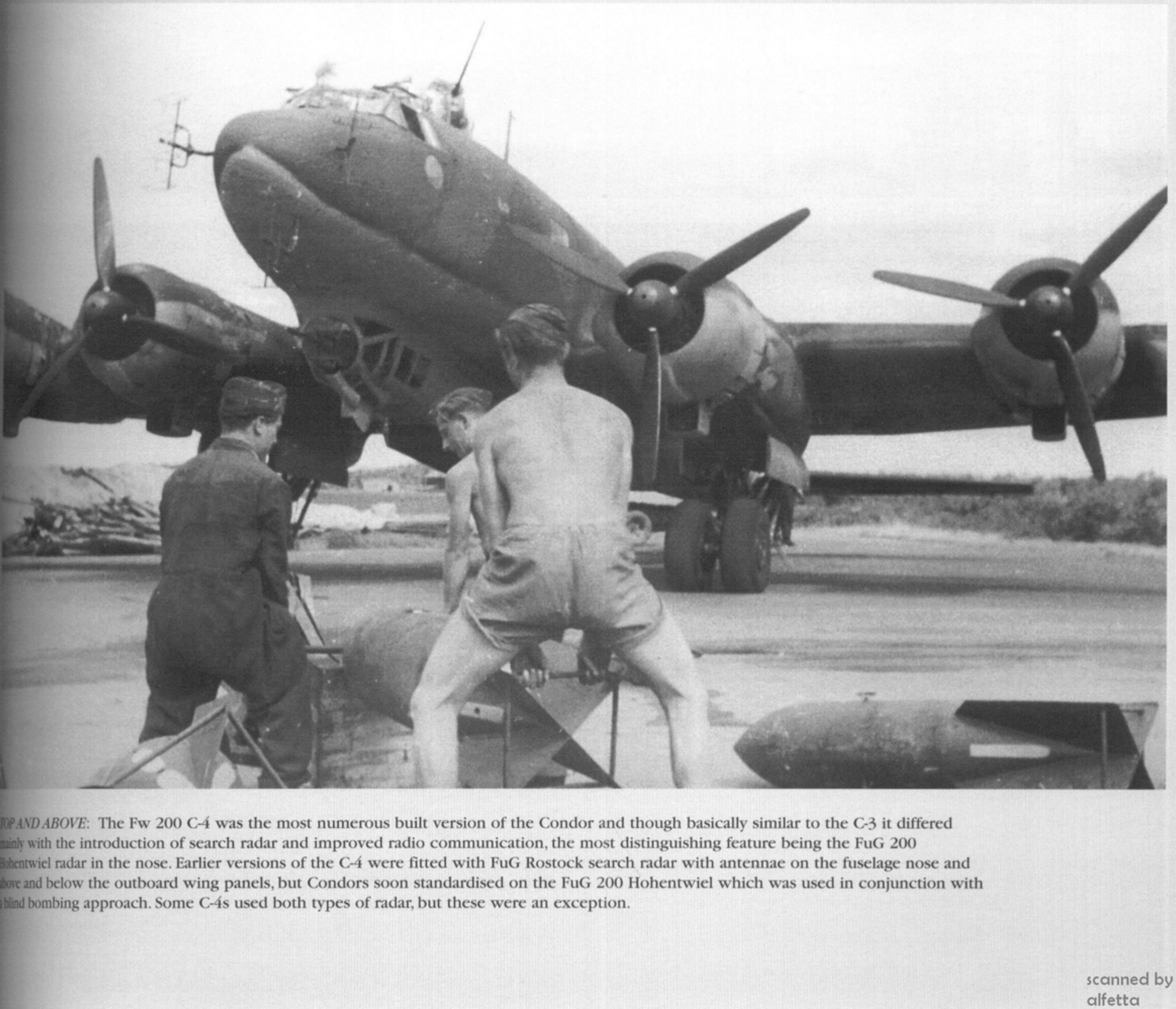


ABOVE: A very clean Fw 200 C-3 or early C-4 Condor awaits its armament which has probably been removed for stripping and cleaning between operations. Note the positions of the four propellers - undoubtedly the ground crew took pride in the appearance of their aircraft.

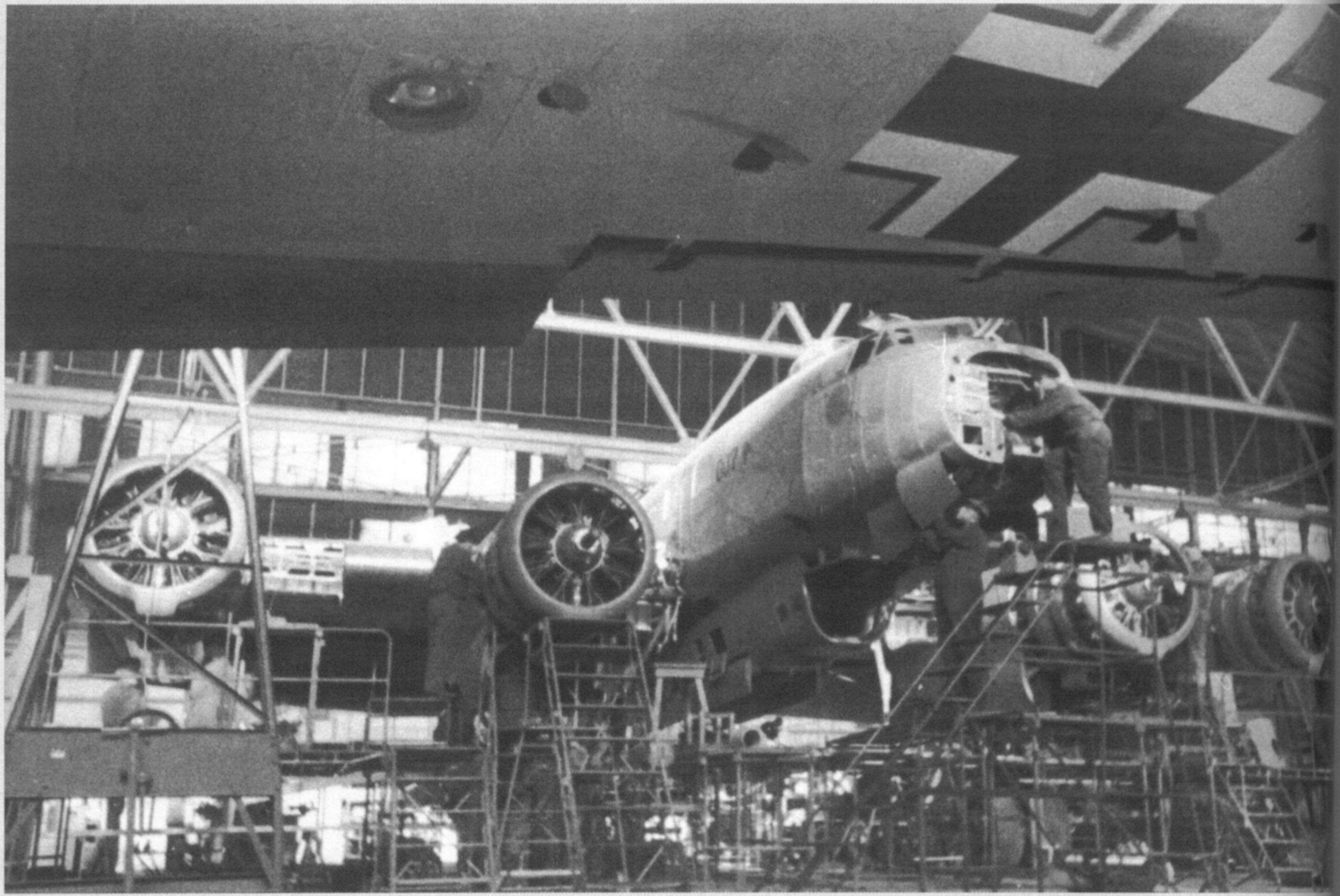


RIGHT: Fw 200 C-3, this was the V13, W.Nr. 0025, built in 1940. It operated over Stalingrad and was 25 per cent damaged during a bombing raid on Saporoschje.

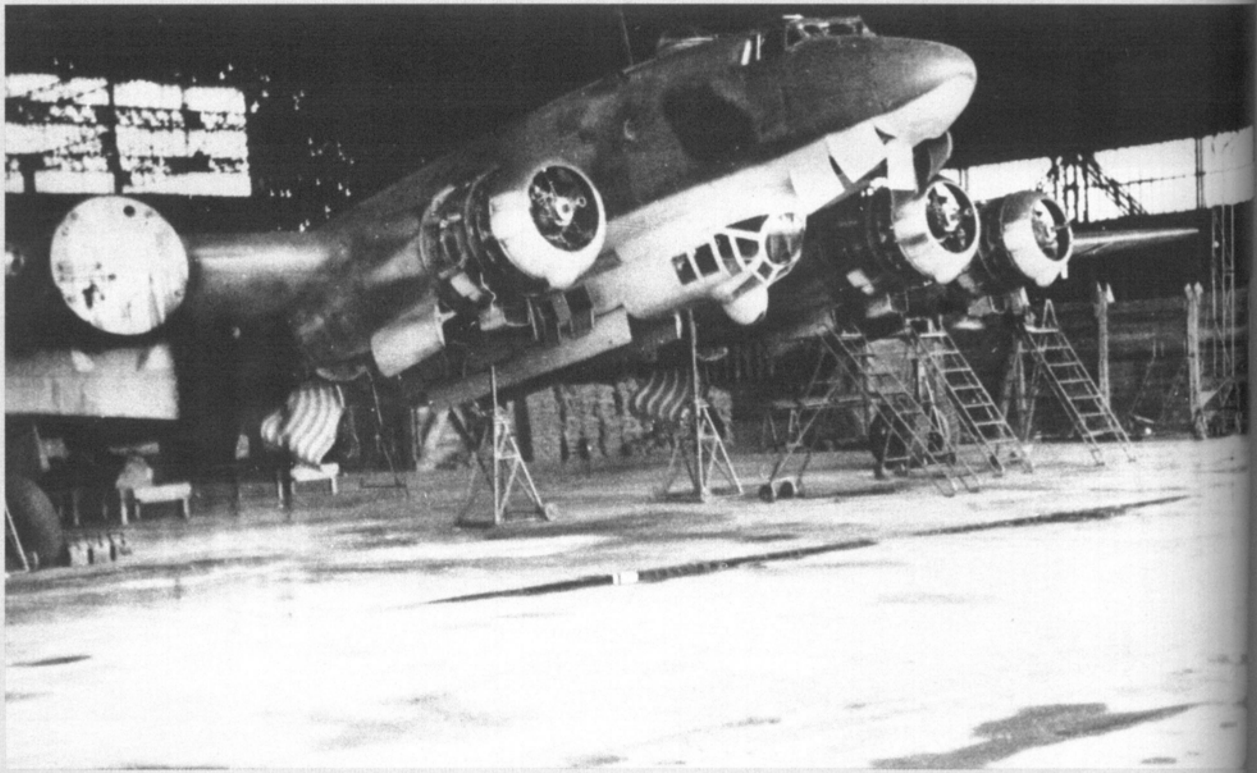




TOP AND ABOVE: The Fw 200 C-4 was the most numerous built version of the Condor and though basically similar to the C-3 it differed mainly with the introduction of search radar and improved radio communication, the most distinguishing feature being the FuG 200 Hohentwiel radar in the nose. Earlier versions of the C-4 were fitted with FuG Rostock search radar with antennae on the fuselage nose and above and below the outboard wing panels, but Condors soon standardised on the FuG 200 Hohentwiel which was used in conjunction with a blind bombing approach. Some C-4s used both types of radar, but these were an exception.



ABOVE: An early Fw 200 C-1 or a C-2 under construction. The distinguishing feature is the earlier style engine cowlings which contained the BMW 132H radial engine rated at 830 hp at 1100 metres. The C-1 model introduced the ventral gondola offset to starboard on the Condor, which became such a common feature on all subsequent models.



ABOVE: An interesting comparison to the photograph at the top of the page, this picture shows an Fw 200 C-3/U2 undergoing heavy maintenance, the later style stream-lined cowlings housing the BMW-Bramo 323R-2 Fafnir nine-cylinder radial engines being most apparent. Note the access hatches open in the nose and gondola.

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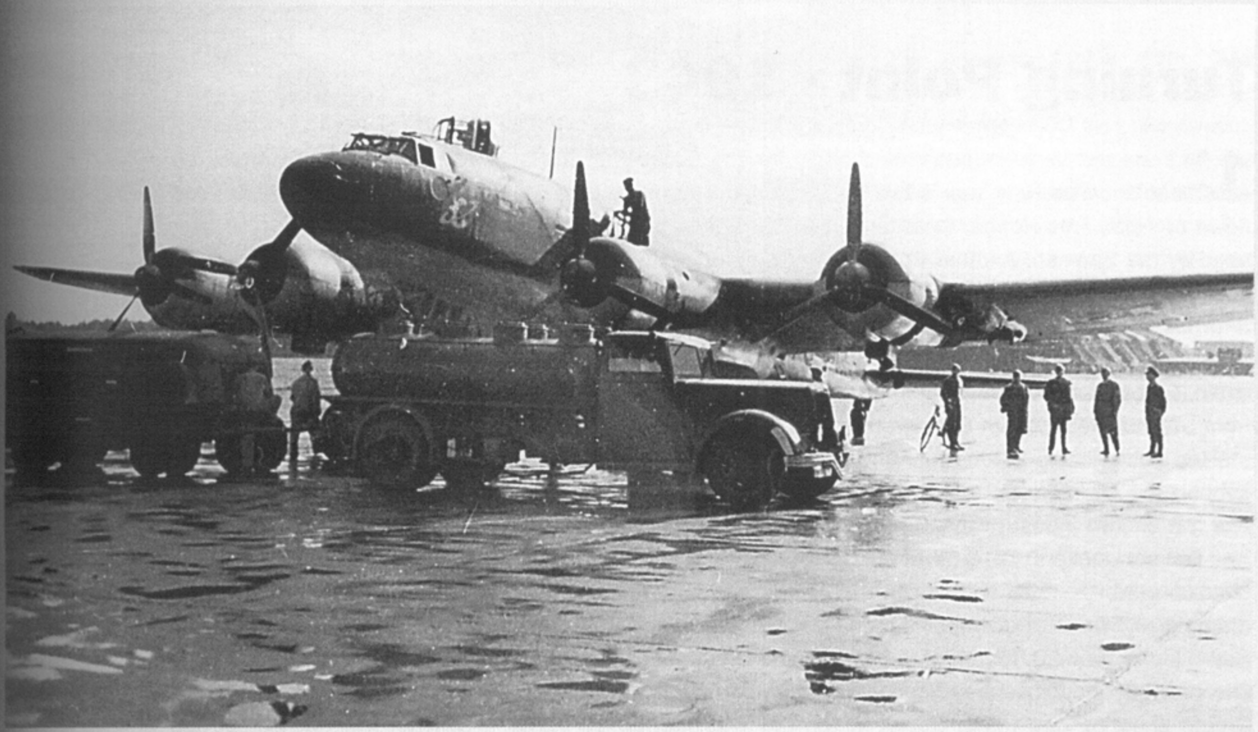
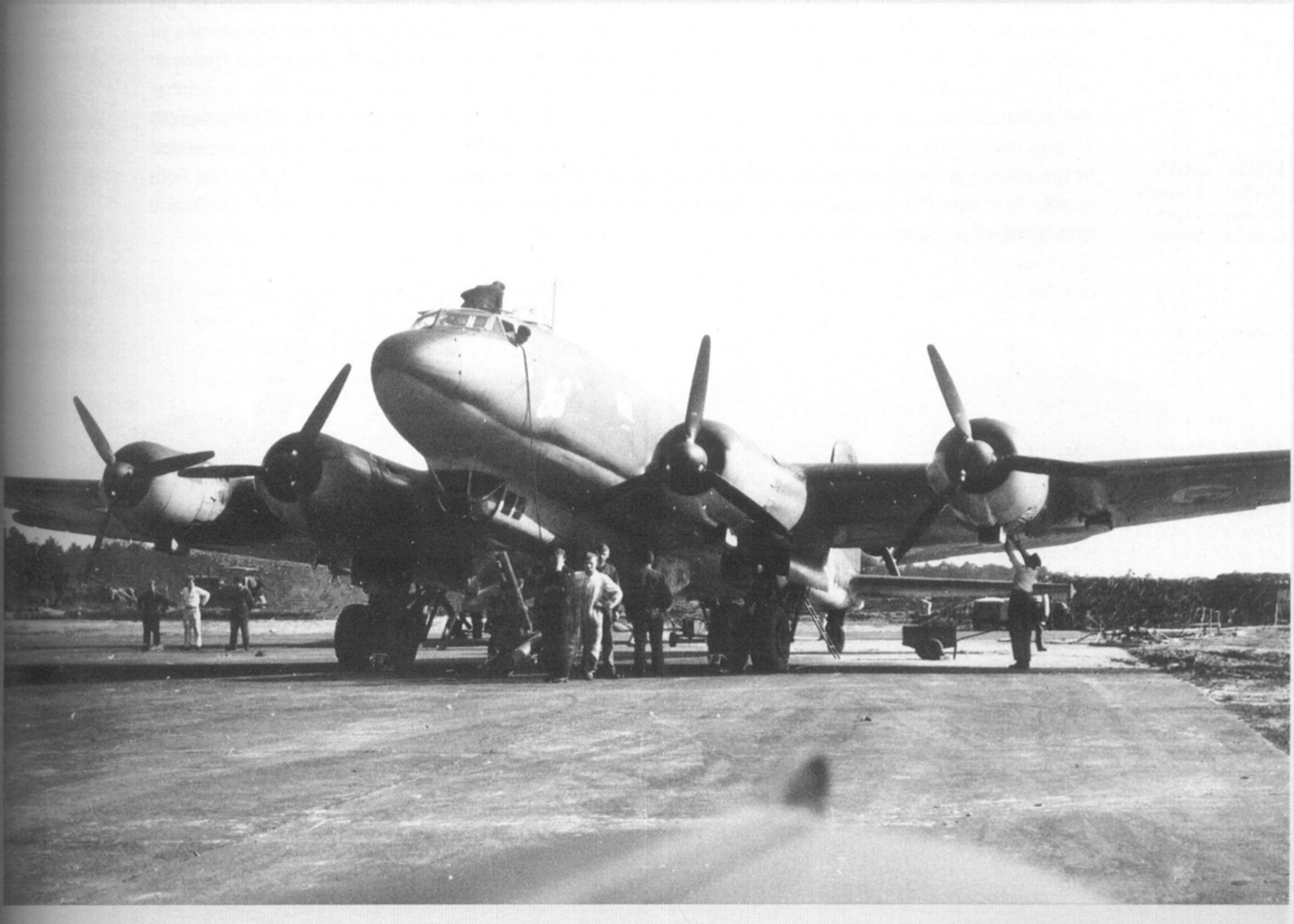


LEFT: Refuelling an Fw 200 C-4 of 1./KG 40 at Bordeaux-Merignac. All aircraft of KG 40 carried the 'world-in-a-ring' badge on both sides of the fuselage nose aft of the cockpit.



ABOVE: An Fw 200 C-3 of KG 40 undergoing maintenance on the ramp. The C-3 embodied major strengthening to the main spar and fuselage in an attempt to curb the structural failures. This model also saw the introduction of the low drag Fw 19 hydraulically-operated forward dorsal turret with a single 7.9 mm machine gun.

Turning Point - 1943

1943 started very unusually and badly for the Focke-Wulf 200s of KG 40. During an attack on Casablanca on New Year's Eve by 12 Condors from III. Gruppe, two aircraft from 8 *Staffel*, one flown by *Hptm* Fritz Hoppe, force-landed at San Pablo in Spain, both aircraft being interned and later used by the Spanish. Another Condor flown by *Oblt* Günther Gräber, *Staffel Kapitän* of 7./KG 40 was believed to have crashed near Gran Canaria with the loss of all of the crew, whilst a further Condor returned with a wounded gunner. Meanwhile, much further north, a Condor of 2./KG 40 shadowing convoy JW 51B on New Year's Day went missing; *Oblt* Dietrich Weber and his crew were never seen again. Just under two weeks later, aircraft and crews from I./KG 40 were moved eastwards, to operate from Stalino in support of German troops at Stalingrad, something that a number of crews had already started doing in the Mediterranean at the end of October 1942 when they went to Lecce in Italy to support the *Afrika Korps*[1]. Re-designated KGrzbV 200, the Russian detachment would lose three crews and five aircraft in just over two weeks before the fall of the Stalingrad pocket.

For the Junkers 88 C-6s of V./KG 40, 1942 had seen them finish on a high. With the Allied build-up in North Africa continuing, the numbers of aircraft transiting the Bay of Biscay had increased dramatically. On 23 December they had bounced a formation of P-38 Lightnings of the 82nd Fighter Group led by an A-20 Boston of the 47th Bomb Group, shooting down a P-38 and the A-20 without loss. Then on 30 December they bounced another formation of P-39 Airacobras of the 68th Observation Group, shooting down one. However, the day was marred by the loss of *Hptm* Helmut Dargel, the *Gruppen Kommandeur*. Dargel had taken command of the *Gruppe* following the death of the experienced *Hptm* Gerd Korthals on 3 November 1942 in a freak accident. In its first six months of operating over the Bay of Biscay, the *Gruppe* had shot down a good number of British and American aircraft, forcing the RAF to increase the numbers of Coastal Command Bristol Beaufighters to combat the 'Junkers Menace'. However, V./KG 40 had lost two *Gruppen Kommandeur* and two *Staffel Kapitän* to date, two of them in needless accidents. All four were experienced pilots whom the *Gruppe* needed in the coming months, as shown by two combats at the end of January 1943 when, four crews from V./KG 40 were shot down. The following accounts are taken from the Coastal Command Intelligence Summary:

BELOW: A KG 40 Fw 200 C-3 Condor receives fuel prior to its next mission.

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1. The Mediterranean detachment ended in February 1943.

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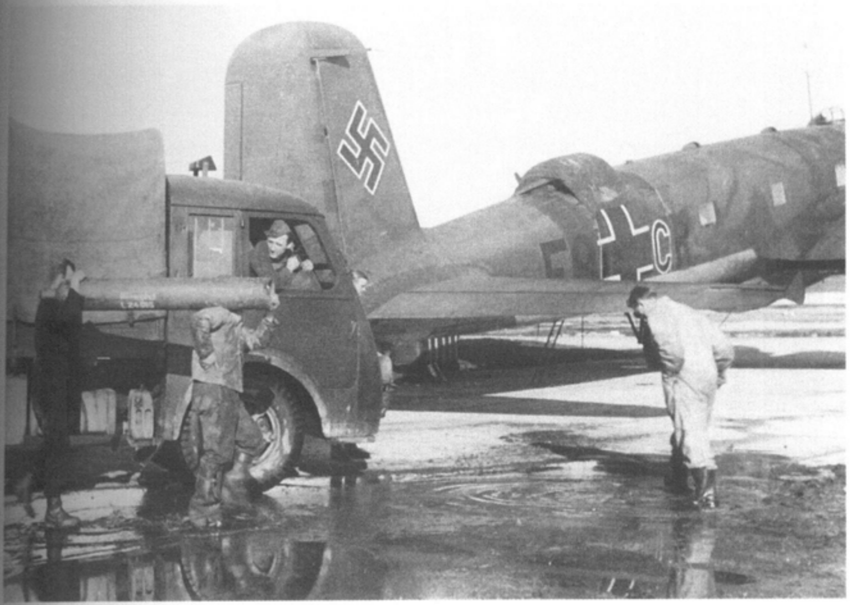

29 January 1943: Four 248 Squadron Beaufighters sighted whilst flying at 50 feet two Junkers 88s two miles astern, also at sea level. Formation immediately changed course, [2] aircraft... attacking one enemy aircraft and [2] the other. In the first case...enemy aircraft's starboard engine caught fire; second aircraft then made two attacks, first aircraft making final attack as enemy aircraft was fluttering along the wave tops on one engine. The port engine then caught fire and enemy aircraft dived into the sea. Meanwhile, the other two aircraft were attacking the second enemy aircraft. First Beaufighter made first attack and sustained some damage from return fire. Second Beaufighter attacked, registering hits and dense clouds of white smoke were emitting from enemy aircraft's port engine. First Beaufighter then delivered a final attack and enemy aircraft's starboard engine caught fire and enemy aircraft was seen to crash into the sea, burning furiously, and then appeared to disintegrate into burning patches."

ABOVE: Two mechanics carry a cylinder, used to top up the on-board oxygen supply, towards a Fw 200 of 7./KG 40. This Condor carries the splinter pattern of RLM 72 and 73 with the code F8+CR in black with the aircraft letter 'C' edged in white. On many Fw 200s the fuselage Balkenkreuz had narrow white outlines.

The combat the following day, which also involved 248 Squadron, was equally spectacular but not so one-sided:

"Four Ju 88s were sighted three miles distant...Beaufighters closed to within 300 yards of nearest enemy aircraft and first Beaufighter delivered attack from astern, hits were seen to register on port engine of enemy aircraft which was observed to be on fire; return fire was experienced but no hits were registered. Beaufighter broke away to starboard and a few seconds later, enemy aircraft was seen to crash in the sea and break up. Beaufighter then commenced to climb and another unidentified aircraft was observed pursuing a second which was on fire; suddenly pursuing aircraft was seen to explode and both machines dived into the sea..."

The combat on 29 January had cost the lives of *Ofw* Johannes Kreidel and *Uffz* Paul Paschoff and their crews. The following day saw the deaths of *Hptm* Hans-William Reicke, *Staffel kapitän* of 14./KG 40, and *Ofw* Georg Heuer and their crews but they accounted for the Beaufighters flown by Fg Off. Elson Cunningham and Sgt Stuart Bell of 248 Squadron. The loss of *Hptm* Reicke, another experienced pilot who had flown with I./KG 40 and KG*r* 606, was yet another blow to V./KG 40; he had collided with one of the Beaufighters, whilst the other was credited to *Uffz* Jürgen Heicke.

Apart from these isolated incidents, the first two months of 1943 were relatively quiet. In the Arctic, convoys JW 51 A and B had arrived and departed with minimal *Luftwaffe* interference whilst convoy JW 52 to Russia and RA 52 from Russia in January 1943 saw just the one loss to a U-boat; a failed attack against JW 52 on 23 January 1943 by 1./406 resulted in the loss of two Heinkel 115s commanded by *Lt* Hans-Georg Schmidt and *Lt* Arno Kratz. From this point on, the Heinkel 115 all but disappears from the *Luftwaffe's* anti-shipping aircraft inventory, 1./406 being

BELOW: 9./KG 40, as a change to its normal anti-shipping duties, began re-supply duties in North Africa, late in 1942. Seen here are (left) Fw Walter Spendrath (killed 18 July 1944) and Uffz Otto Kipp.

the last unit to operate this aircraft until October 1944 and 1./906 being re-designated 8./KG 26 in July 1943.

In February 1943, convoy JW 53 arrived in Russia without any losses whilst the return convoy, RA 53 in March 1943 lost just three freighters to U-boats. No further convoys now took place until August 1943 and even then, it would be the *Kriegsmarine* that played the major part; the *Luftwaffe's* anti-shipping war in the seas off Norway did not recommence until late 1944 by which time it was too late to affect the outcome of the war.

ABOVE: Three fl
crew of 9./KG 40
pause for a mome
during unloading
operations during
the unit's re-suppl
missions to North
Africa in 1942.Th
crew are from left
right: Uffz Karl
Nothelfer
(killed 27 January
1944), Uffz Siegfri
Hoffmann and Uf
Otto Kipp.

In the Mediterranean, I./KG 26, now commanded by *Maj* Werner Klümper who, at the end of January 1943, would hand over to *Hptm* Herbert Vater, former *Staffel Kapitän* of 1./406, was operating out of Decimomanu in Sardinia whilst *Hptm* Georg Teske's II./KG 26 was operating out of Villacidro in Sardinia. Both *Gruppen* were still operating the Heinkel 111 and would continue to do so until July 1944 (I. *Gruppe*) and June 1943 (II. *Gruppe).* The Junkers 88s of *Hptm* Klaus Nocken's III./KG 26 were still operating out of Groseto. Furthermore, it was a clear sign that the anti-shipping war was still of importance to the *Luftwaffe* that at the end of January 1943, *Generalmaj* Martin Harlinghausen was given command of II. *Fliegerkorps* with specific responsibility for anti-shipping operations in the Mediterranean.

However, despite the increased Allied presence, anti-shipping operations in the Mediterranean for the first half of 1943 were not as major as 1942. Notable dates were 6 February when seven Heinkel 111s and seven Junkers 88s, led by *Oblt* Rudi Schmidt of 4./KG 26, attacked the convoy KMS 8 off Algiers sinking the Canadian corvette *Louisburg* and torpedoing the freighter *Fort Babine* for the loss of two Heinkel 111s. On 22 March 1943, KG 26 struck again, sinking the troopship *Windsor Castle;* amazingly, only one man out of the 3,000 on board was killed.

As the *Luftwaffe* began to take primacy over the *Regia Aeronautica* for anti-shipping operations, it was inevitable that German losses would start to rise. *Bordmechaniker Uffz* Anton Temmen was posted to III./KG 26 in 1943 and recalls:

BELOW:
A Ju 88 C-6 of 14./KG 40 forms a backdrop in September 1942 for some officers within the unit. They are from left to right, Lt Hermann Flothmann (killed 1 November 1942), Lt Herbert Hintze, Lt Heinz Olbrecht, Hptm Wilheim Reicke, Lt Helmut Schulli (killed 7 October 1943), Lt Helmut Messerschmitt (killed 11 April 1944).

"About half way through 1942, I was posted to Lübeck-Blankensee. Here, at IV./KG 26, commanded by Major *Fritz Gehring, crews were formed and flying training began with night flying, cross country flights and low level flying over the sea. From there, we were transferred to the* Torpedo-Ausbildungsschule *at Grosseto; after special training, we were assigned to 8./KG 26.* Hptm *Klaus Nocken,* Gruppen-Kommandeur *of III./KG 26 met us (five or six crews) at Grosseto. At that time, III. Gruppe was in Villacidro and* Hptm *Nocken introduced himself with the words "Gentlemen, we are flying to Sardinia and we are not going to land until the low-level formation flying is perfect..."*

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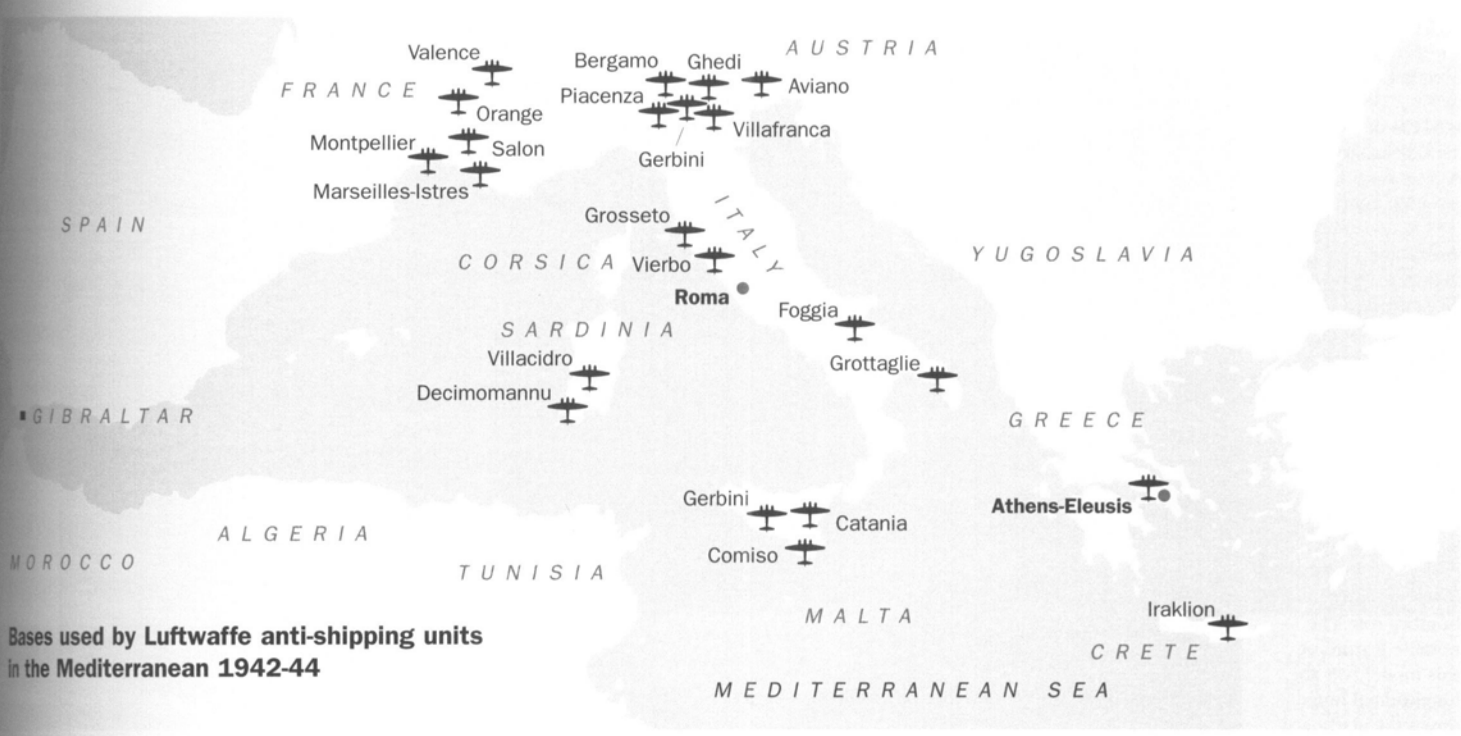
Valence
FRANCE
Orange
Montpellier
Salon
Marseilles-Istres
Bergamo
Ghedi
AUSTRIA
Aviano
Piacenza
Villafranca
Gerbini
SPAIN
Grosseto
ITALY
CORSICA
Vierbo
YUGOSLAVIA
Roma
Foggia
SARDINIA
Villacidro
Grottaglie
Decimomannu
GIBRALTAR
GREECE
Gerbini
Athens-Eleusis
Catania
ALGERIA
Comiso
MOROCCO
TUNISIA
MALTA
Iraklion
CRETE
MEDITERRANEAN SEA

Bases used by Luftwaffe anti-shipping units in the Mediterranean 1942-44

Oberleutnant Kurt Necesany

Oblt. Kurt Necesany was typical of many of the pilots posted to V./KG 40. Born in Oedenburg on 28 November 1920, he joined the *Luftwaffe* straight from school in October 1939. Promoted to Leutnant in February 1941, following flying training, he was posted to the newly formed 13./KG 40 in early Summer 1942, flying his first operational flight on 9 September 1942. Just two days later, he had his first brush with the RAF when he was credited with shooting down a Wellington. In fact the Wellington from 311 Squadron managed to return to base, albeit badly damaged. However, on 17 September 1942, he successfully shot down a Hudson of 500 Squadron; no one from the crew survived.

September 1942 would continue to be a successful month for Kurt Necesany who damaged a Wellington of 304 Squadron on 24 September and then shot down a Whitley of 51 Squadron on the last day of the month. The *Eisern Kreuz Second Class* was awarded this month, the *Eisern Kreuz First Class* and *Frontflugspange in Bronze* the following month. However, despite being involved in many operational flights and participating in a number of combats, his next confirmed kill was not until 22 August 1943 when he shot down a Wellington of 304 Squadron. By then he had been promoted to *Oberleutnant*, received the *Frontflugspange in Gold* and been given command of 14. *Staffel* following the death of *Hptm* Hans-William Reicke on 30 January 1943. He would achieve just one more kill, a Liberator of 224 Squadron on 2 September 1943, before he handed over command of his *Staffel* to *Oblt* Albrecht Bellstedt at the start of November 1943. He then became the *Gruppen* Ia of what was now I./ZG 1 when the previous *Gruppen* Ia, *Hptm* Horst Grahl, became *Kommandeur.*

Kurt Necesany would live just another three months. On 14 February 1944, he escorted his *Geschwader Kommodore*, *Obstl.* Lothar Von Janson, on an armed reconnaissance over the Bay of Biscay when they spotted a PB4 Y-1 Liberator of VB103 flown by Lt K. L. Wright. During the attack, Von Janson noticed flames coming from Necesany's Junkers 88 and the fighter then crashed into the sea; although they did not see it, the Liberator later ditched due to damage inflicted in Necesany's attack. Eight Americans were rescued and three killed but there were no survivors from Kurt Necesany's crew. Such was his loss that Von Janson and *Fliegerführer Atlantik* himself wrote to Necesany's wife Ruth, hoping that he had survived. However, she subsquently received his posthumous award of the *Ehrenpokal* in March 1944.

Wir
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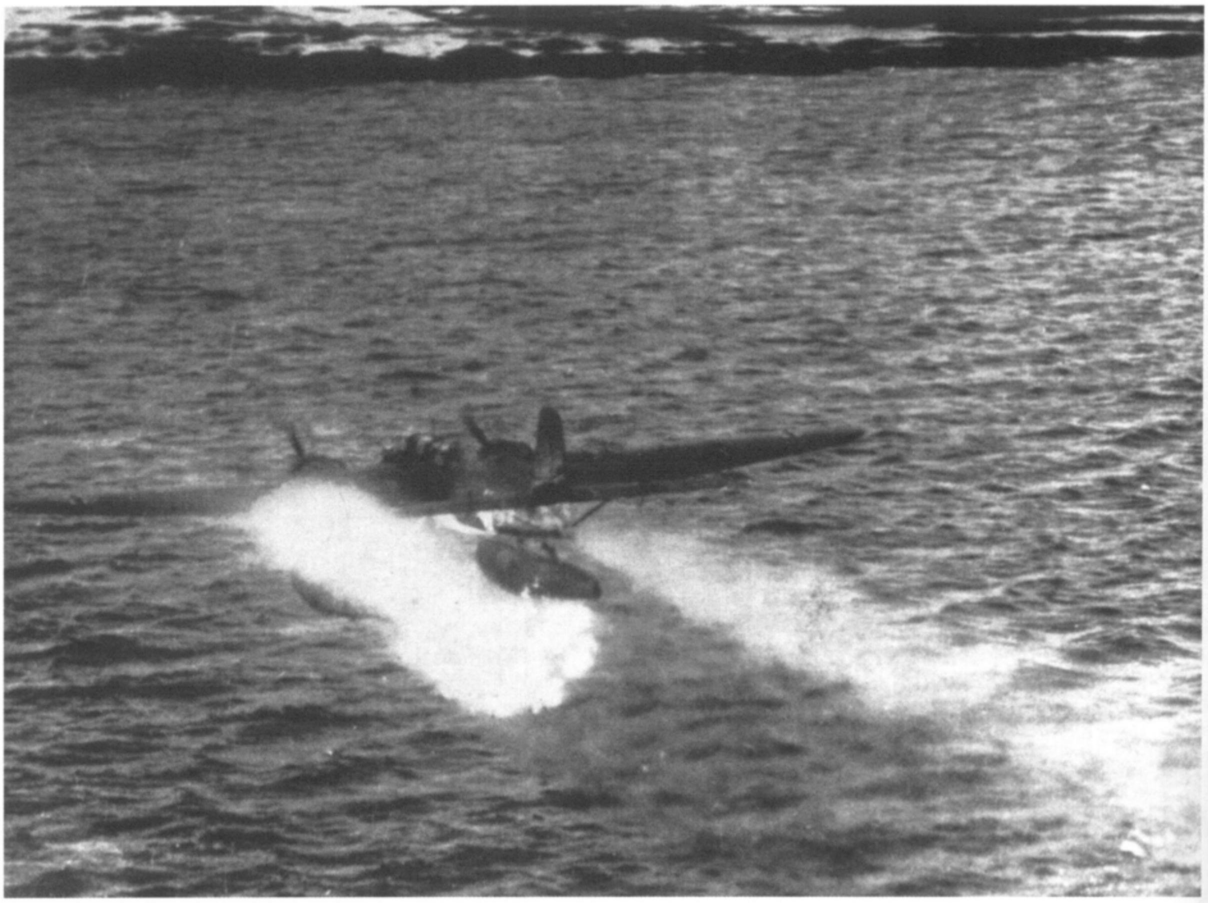
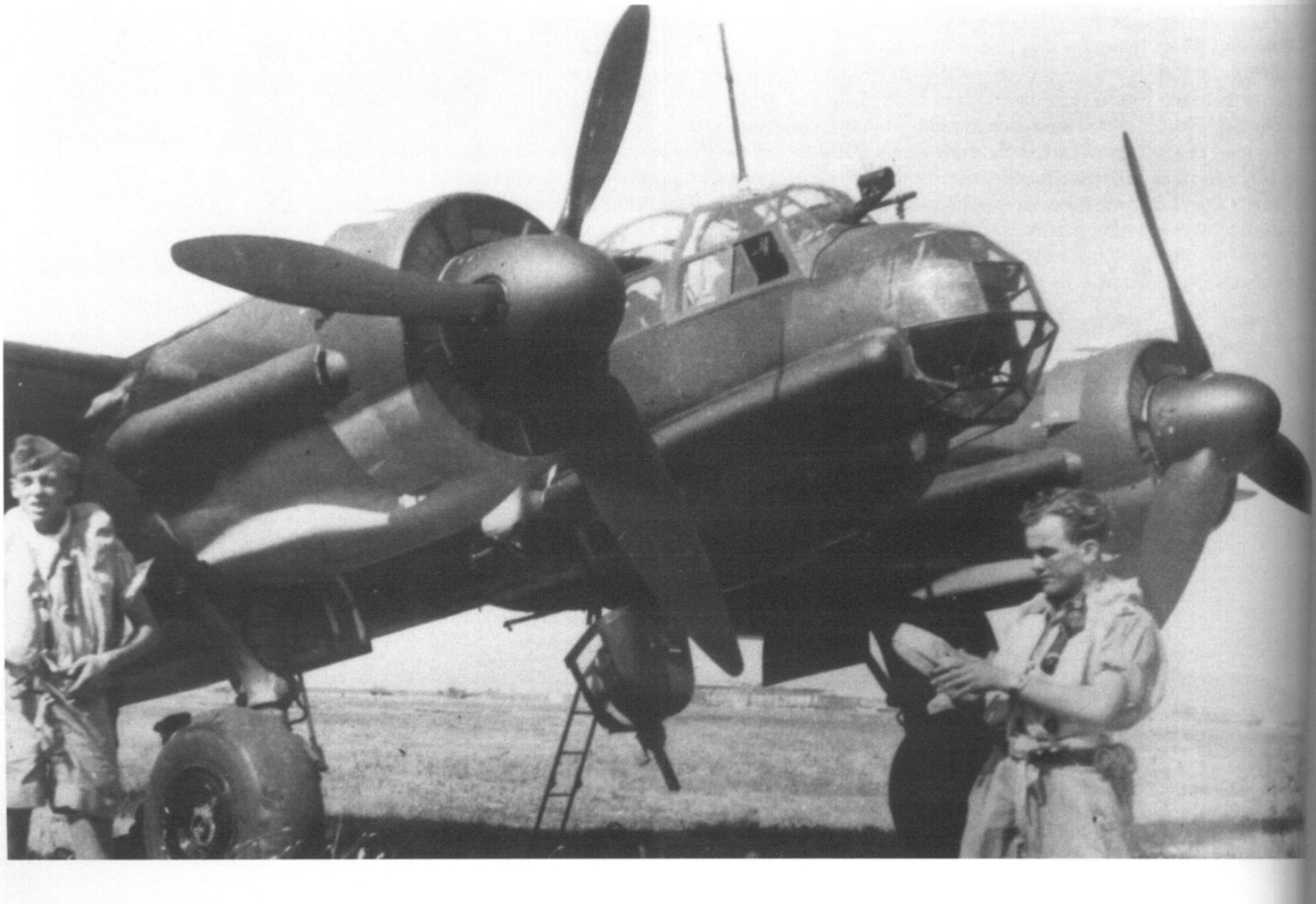
Feindflug

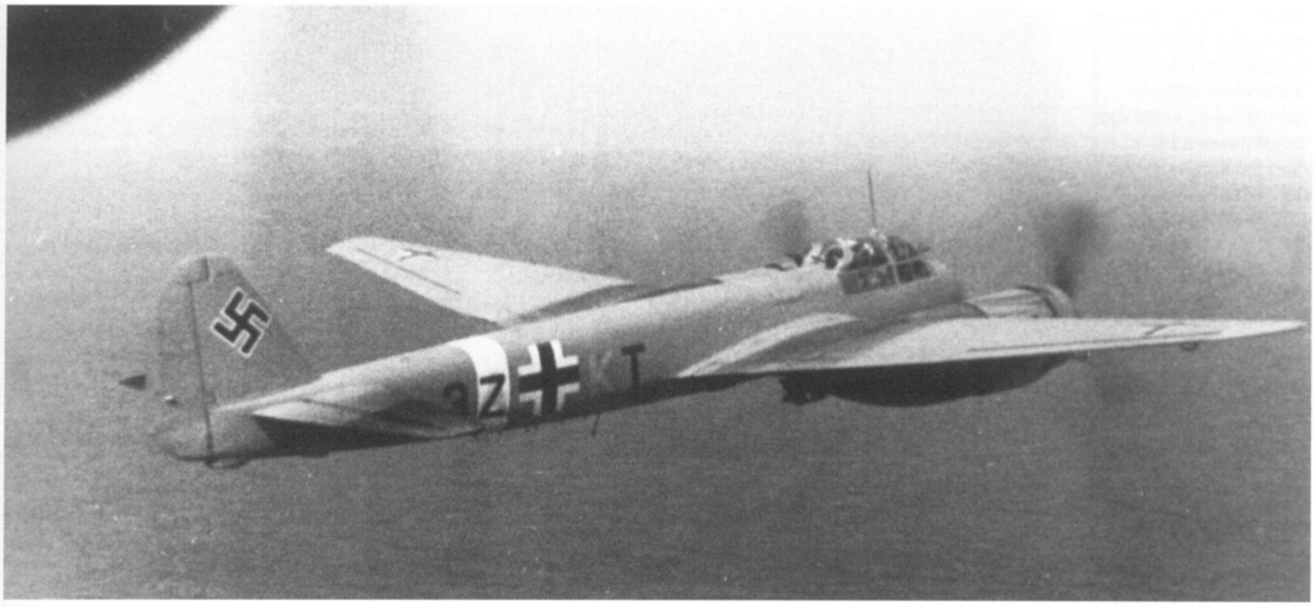
It is the 500th operational flight of 14./KG 40 on 13 June 1943, Oblt Kurt Necesany with the wreath around his neck with his crew Uffz Fisher (left) and Uffz Kasch (right), celebrating their 500th operational flight. Their Ju 88 C-6 coded F8+RY stands behind.

RIGHT: Last moments of Heinkel He 115 W.Nr. 20382, coded K6+CH of 1./406 on 6 February 1944 as it is shot down by a Mosquito of 333 Squadron near Bremanger, Norway. Ofw Herman Borgards and his crew did not survive.

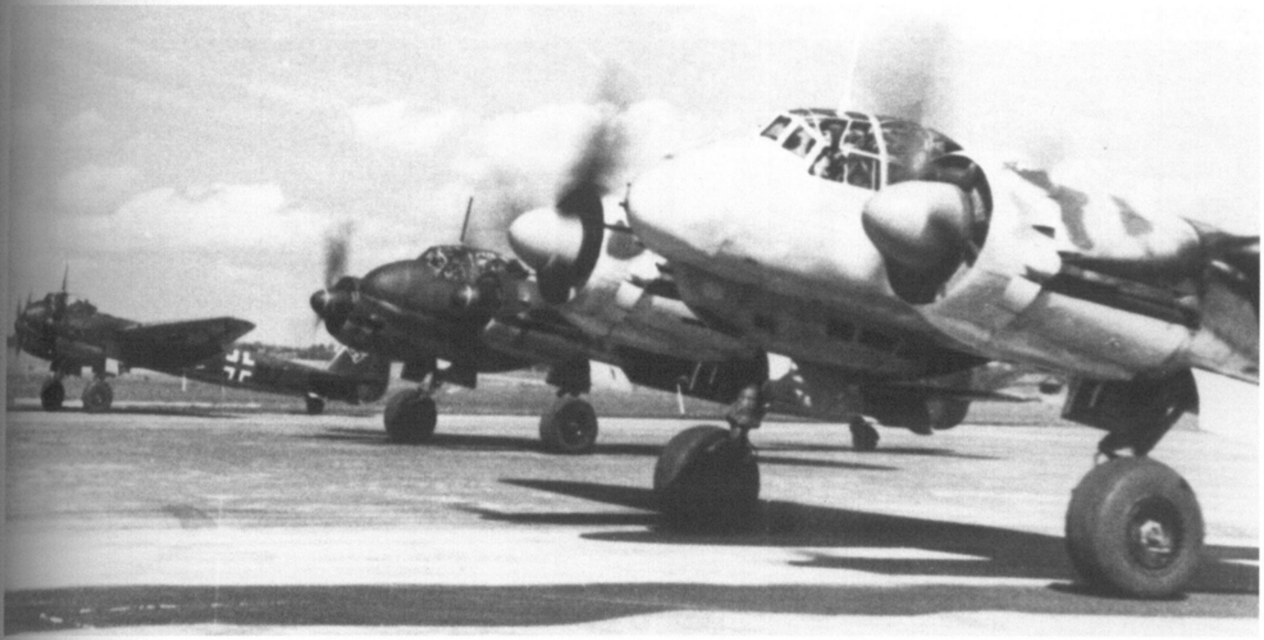


BELOW: A Ju 88 A-17 of 8./KG 26. The A-17 variant was an A-4 converted into the dedicated torpedo-bomber role. The notable feature of this model was the longitudinal bulge down the starboard side of the nose which contained the equipment for adjusting the steering mechanism for the torpedoes in the air.

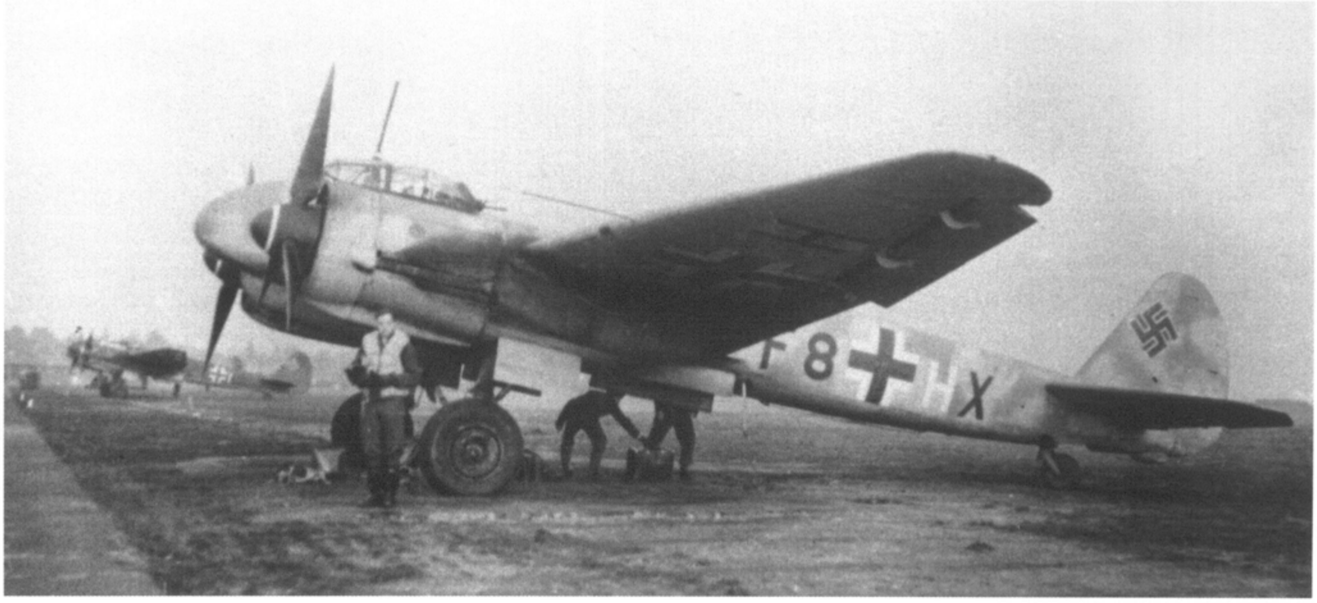




RIGHT: When III./KG 77 moved to Comiso in Sicily during January 1942, its Ju 88s were repainted with desert sand (RLM 79) uppersurfaces and sky blue (RLM 78) undersurfaces. This particular aircraft coded 3Z+KT, also carries the white rear fuselage band common to Luftwaffe aircraft operating in the area.

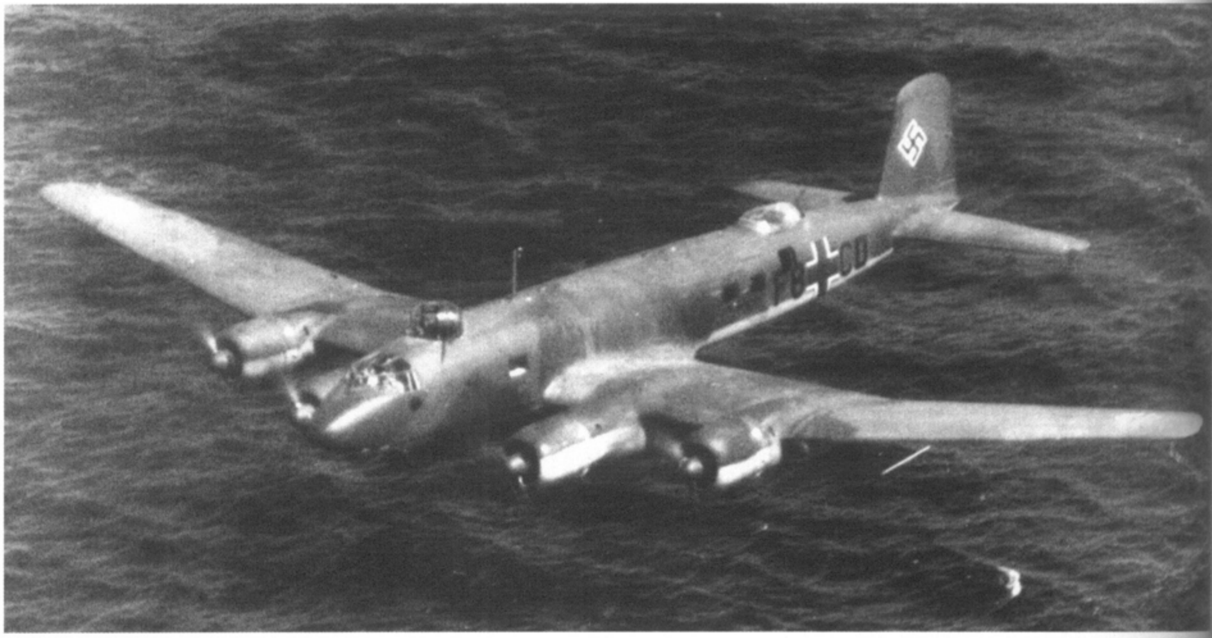


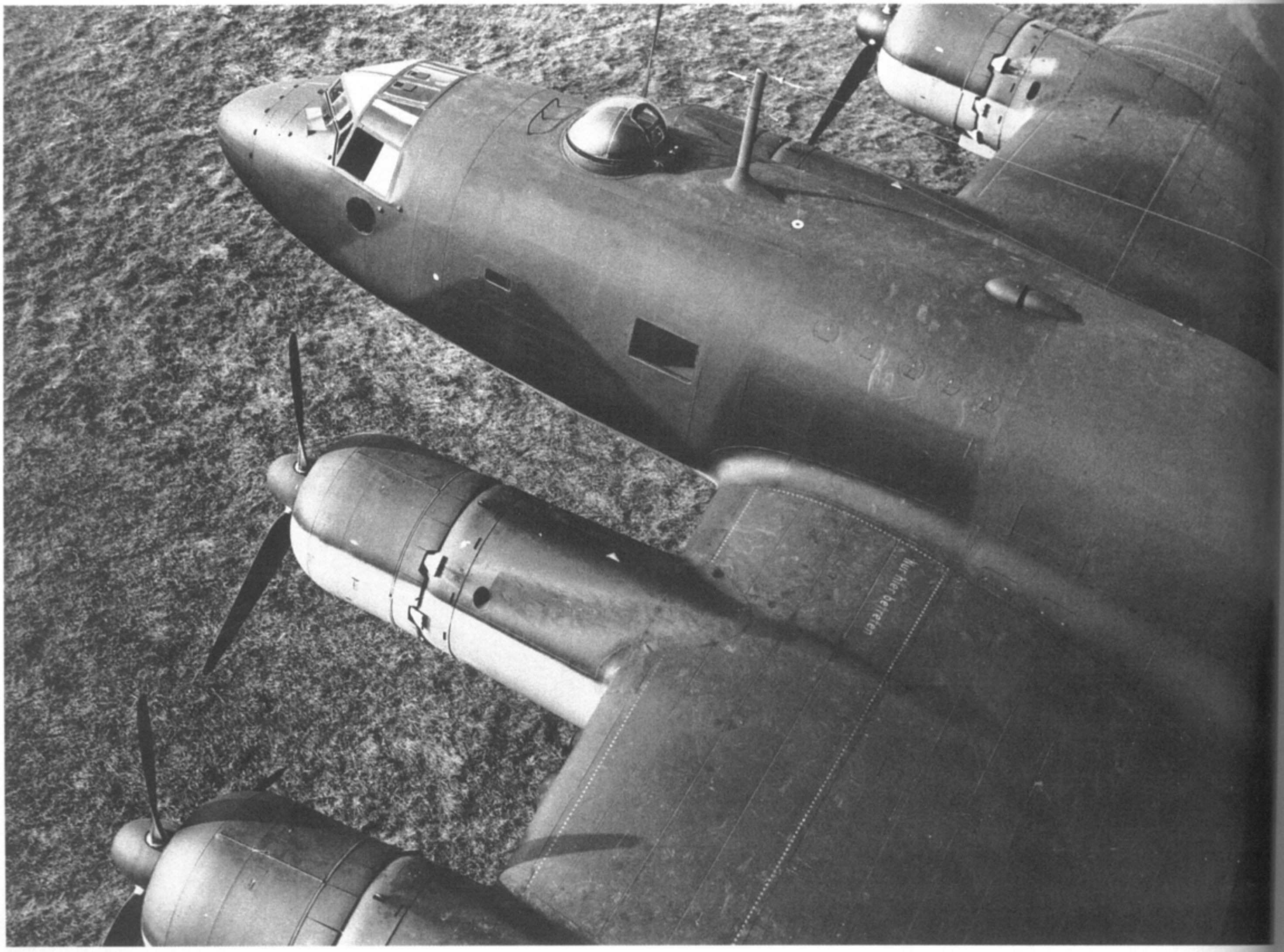
LEFT: Three Ju 88 C-6s of 14./KG 40 taxi out in preparation for a patrol in the summer of 1943. The aircraft in the foreground is sporting a most unusual colour scheme of an all-over light blue (RLM 76) with patches of the original green splinter pattern on the engine nacelles showing through.



RIGHT: Ju 88 C-6 of 13./KG 40 at Cognac, 1942-43. This aircraft also appears to have been sprayed in a coat of RLM 76 over the factory splinter scheme with varying degrees of depth. The code 'F8' and Staffel letter 'X' are in black with the individual aircraft letter 'H' in white. The spinner has had a thin white line applied, approximately one-third from the tip.

RIGHT: Flying low over the sea is Fw 200 C-5 W.Nr. 0218, coded F8+CD, factory call sign TA+MT, flown by Oblt Joachim Ohm of the Stab Flight of III./KG 40. Built in 1943, it was destroyed in a crash near Trondheim on 14 August 1944. As a Gruppen Stab aircraft the letter 'C' was painted black and thinly outlined in green. The aircraft carries a splinter pattern of RLM 72/73 with RLM 65 underneath. It also appears that the spinner tips were also painted in the green Stab colour.





ABOVE: Excellent detail is given in this overhead view of an Fw 200 C-3 Condor. Of interest is the canopy, showing escape hatches, internal overhead (folded) blinds and sliding windows. Aft of the cockpit is the low drag Fw 19 dorsal gun turret minus its 7.9-mm MG 15 machine g The small three pronged erection just forward of the turret is a blast guard (to prevent the machine gun from firing into the cockpit). The wording 'Nur hier betreten' on the port inner wing walk-way means 'Only walk here'. Note the five circular fuel filler points for the five inte fuselage tanks atop the fuselage adjacent to the teardrop shaped blister, which is one of two vents to clear the fuselage of fuel vapour.

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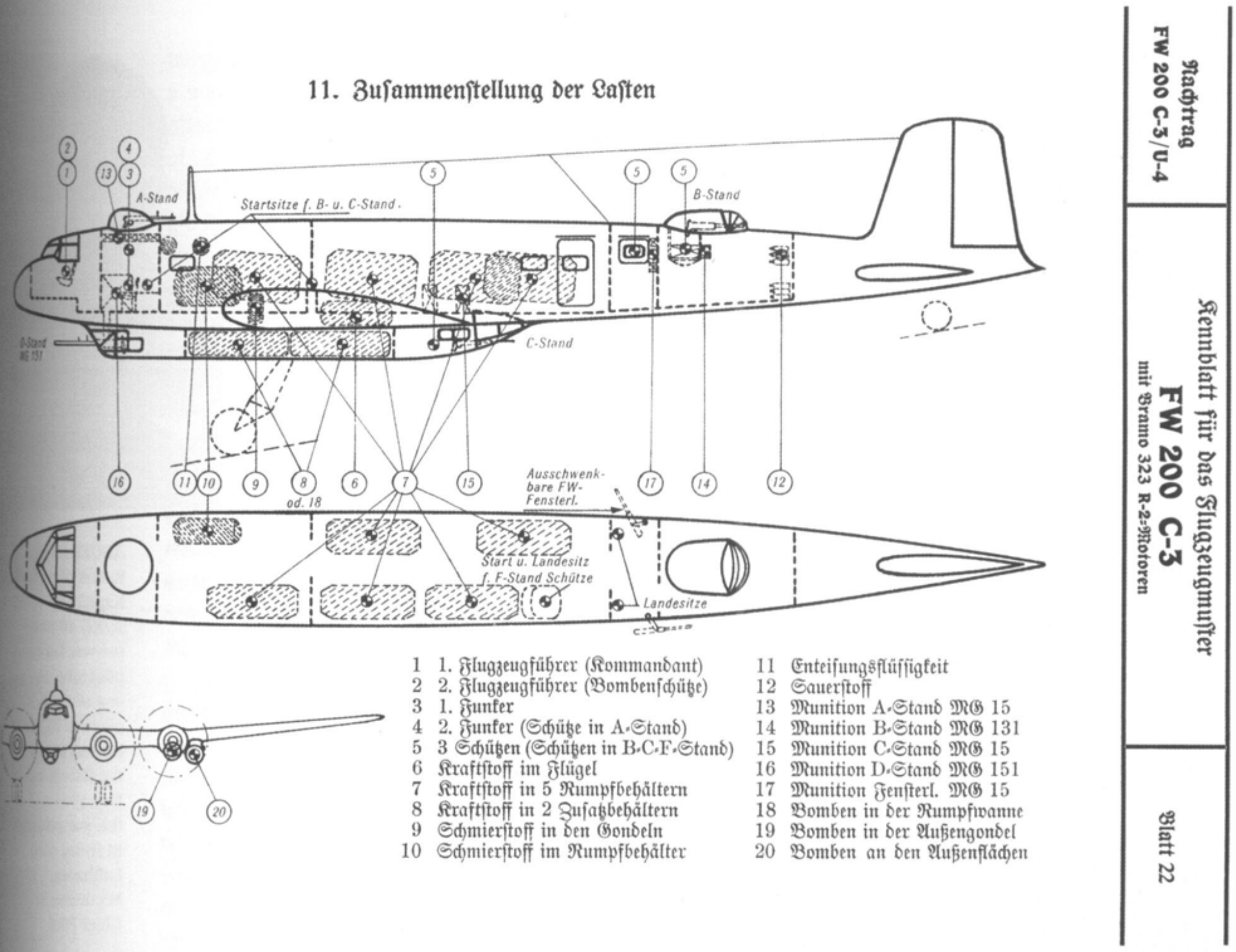
alfetta



11. Zuſammenſtellung der Laſten

A-Stand
Startsitze f. B- u. C-Stand
B-Stand
C-Stand
D-Stand MG 151
Ausschwenkbare FW-Fensterl.
Start u. Landesitz f. F-Stand Schütze
Landesitze
od. 18
1
2
3
4
5
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7
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14
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17
19
20

1 1. Flugzeugführer (Kommandant)
2 2. Flugzeugführer (Bombenſchütze)
3 1. Funker
4 2. Funker (Schütze in A-Stand)
5 3 Schützen (Schützen in B-C-F-Stand)
6 Kraftſtoff im Flügel
7 Kraftſtoff in 5 Rumpfbehältern
8 Kraftſtoff in 2 Zuſatzbehältern
9 Schmierſtoff in den Gondeln
10 Schmierſtoff im Rumpfbehälter
11 Enteiſungsflüſſigkeit
12 Sauerſtoff
13 Munition A-Stand MG 15
14 Munition B-Stand MG 131
15 Munition C-Stand MG 15
16 Munition D-Stand MG 151
17 Munition Fenſterl. MG 15
18 Bomben in der Rumpfwanne
19 Bomben in der Außengondel
20 Bomben an den Außenflächen

Nachtrag
FW 200 C-3/U-4

Kennblatt für das Flugzeugmuſter
FW 200 C-3
mit Bramo 323 R-2-Motoren

Blatt 22

LEFT: A page from a wartime Focke-Wulf 200 manual showing crew and internal equipment dispositions. Key to the German translation:
1) Pilot (Commander)
2) 2. Co-pilots (Bomb aimer)
3) 1. Radio operator
4) 2. Co-radio operators (Gunner in position 'A')
5) 3. Gunners (covering positions B-C-F)
6) Fuel in wings
7) Fuel in 5 fuselage tanks
8) Fuel in 2 optional removable tanks
9) Lubrication oil tank in the gondola
10) Lubrication oil tank in fuselage
11) Anti-freeze fluid
12) Oxygen
13) Ammunition for gun position A – MG 15
14) Ammunition for gun position B – MG 131
15) Ammunition for gun position C – MG 15
16) Ammunition for gun position D – MG 151
17) Ammunition for window gun position – MG 15
18) Bombs in the fuselage bomb bay
19) Bombs in the gondola
20) Bombs externally under the wings

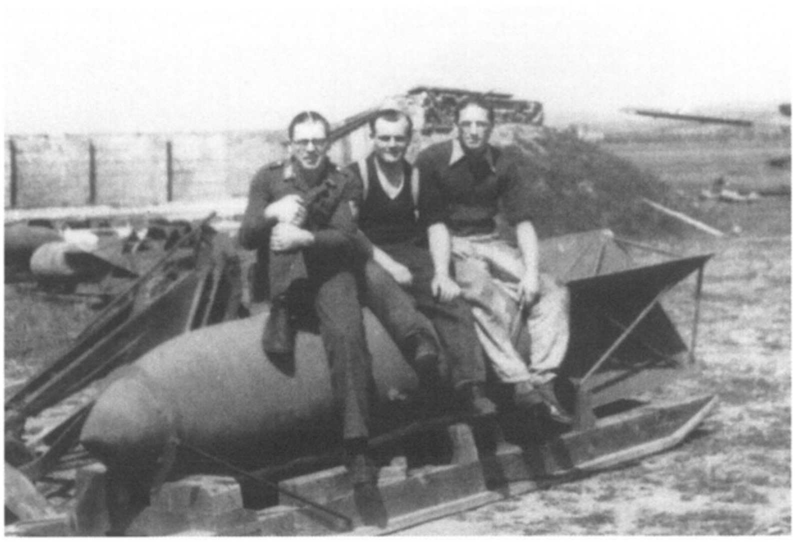
ABOVE: A scene inside the port fuselage of an Fw 200 during an over-water mission. Note the large 300 ltr fuel tank, one of five such tanks that could be installed in the fuselage for extended long-range missions. These unprotected tanks presented a major fire hazard, and made the aircraft vulnerable to return fire from ships or fighter aircraft. The aircrew member is seated in the second radio operator's take-off seat, he has his earphones plugged into the aircraft's communications system while studying map co-ordinates.

Uffz Arno Köper, *Bordfunker* in the same crew, was a little more concerned about operations:

> *"KG 26 was regarded as a suicide squad. To come anywhere near freighters in a convoy, we had to break through the barrage put up by the escorts, normally about a kilometre away from the convoy. Then, 400 metres from the freighter, we dropped out torpedoes flying at a height of 20 metres; any lower and the torpedoes would have jumped out of the water. Later, we were able to drop torpedoes at a much lower altitude..."*

ABOVE: Hptm Rudolf Mayr, Staf Kapitän of 9./KG 40 was a pre-war Lufthans pilot who and w one of the first pilots of KG 40. He was awarded the Ritterkreuz i May 1943 and af the war, returned to flying with Lufthansa, becoming its Chief Pilot.

Both Temmen and Köper, together with their pilot *Lt* Fritz Massloh and Observer *Gefr* Gottlob Hartmaier, were destined to fly together for the remainder of the war, Massloh and Hartmaier being awarded the *Deutsches Kreuz in Gold and* all of them would be awarded the *Ehrenpokal.* They were shot down twice in 1943, the first time during a successful attack on the evening of 1 May 1943. 25 bombers of which six were torpedo aircraft from III./KG 26, attacked convoy 'Liquid' consisting of 16 freighters and 10 escorts north-east of Benghazi. Torpedoes sank the tanker *British Trust* whilst it was thought that bombs sank the troopship *Erinpura.* Escorting fighters from 33 Squadron and 3 Squadron SAAF shot down the Junkers 88 A-4 flown by *Uffz* Hugo Pape of 9./KG 26, with three of the crew being captured, whilst a Heinkel 111 H-11 of 6./KG 26 flown by *Uffz* Karl Hackl, which was shadowing the convoy, was also lost. There was one other loss which is recalled by Anton Temmen:



ABOVE: I./KG 77 stopped dropping conventional bombs (seen here with a SC 1000 bomb as an example in the summer of 1943) in exchange for torpedoes. The unit did not re-appear in the Mediterranean until early 1944.

> *"On 1 May 1943, we transferred from Villacidro to Catania in Sicily with the intention of attacking an Allied convoy off Benghasi. The convoy's defensive fire was like hell and there were several hits on our Ju 88. We did not observe if our target was hit by our torpedoes because all hell had broken loose and despite the* Flak *damage our aircraft had received and although the compass and radio had failed, it was still airworthy.*
>
> *"As usual, the attack had taken place at twilight and in the meantime it had become completely dark. We managed to fly north and hoped to reach Catania. After some time we were flying over land and were shot at by* Flak. *We used our flare pistol to give the identification of the day but this was to no avail and the* Flak *kept shooting but fortunately did not hit us. Gradually we ran short of fuel and as a crew, we considered if we should try and ditch near the coast. That was decided to be too risky so we decided to bale out.*
>
> *"Because I was next to the gondola, I pulled the emergency release and the complete gondola fell away. None of us had baled out before, I felt a little bit queasy while preparing to jump, I sat down so that my legs dangled out of the fuselage and then dropped. After I had turned over in the air a few times, I hoped to be far enough away from the aircraft and pulled the ripcord. There was a violent jerk and, in complete silence, I hung on my parachute.*
>
> *"It was so dark that I had no feeling for the speed of fall and thought if I was going to land on water or land. The ripcord handle was still in my hand and I thought that I could drop it and hear if it hit water or land. At the very moment I dropped it, I hit the ground, one can imagine how relieved I was to stand on dry land again!"*

Temmen had landed on the Italian mainland, not in Sicily as they expected and he and his crew were quickly reunited and, no worse for wear, were soon back in action.

At the end of April 1943, the importance of Grosseto as a torpedo training establishment and base for anti-shipping operations resulted in an attack by American bombers which rendered the airfield temporarily usable by day only. However, a subsequent and far more devastating attack on 20 May 1943 forced the move of KG 102, as KSG 2 had been redesignated on 1 March 1943, back to the Baltic to operate from Riga-Spilve. At about the same time, KG 77 was withdrawn from the Mediterranean in order for *Maj* Willi Sölter's I. *Gruppe* and *Hptm* Hunold *Freiherr* von Nordeck's III./KG 77 to be retrained as torpedo units. In the case of I *Gruppe,* it was withdrawn to Mannheim/Sandhofen on 11 June 1943, moving to Grieslienen in East Prussia in August 1943; it did not return to the Mediterranean until January 1944.

ABOVE: Summer 1943 saw I./KG 77 converting to the torpedo role. Lt Fred Hauschnik and Hptm Walter Kipfmüller are seen controlling crews attacking a target ship in the Baltic. In order to communicate with the aircraft, they are using aircraft communication systems, hence the use of aircrew flying helmets.

As KG 26, soon to be reinforced by all three *Gruppen* of KG 30, struggled on in the Mediterranean against ever increasing odds, the war over the Bay of Biscay and further out into the Atlantic continued to rage. KG 40 still remained the unit that carried out the majority of *Fliegerführer Atlantik's* bidding but it still remained a very fragmented *Geschwader.*

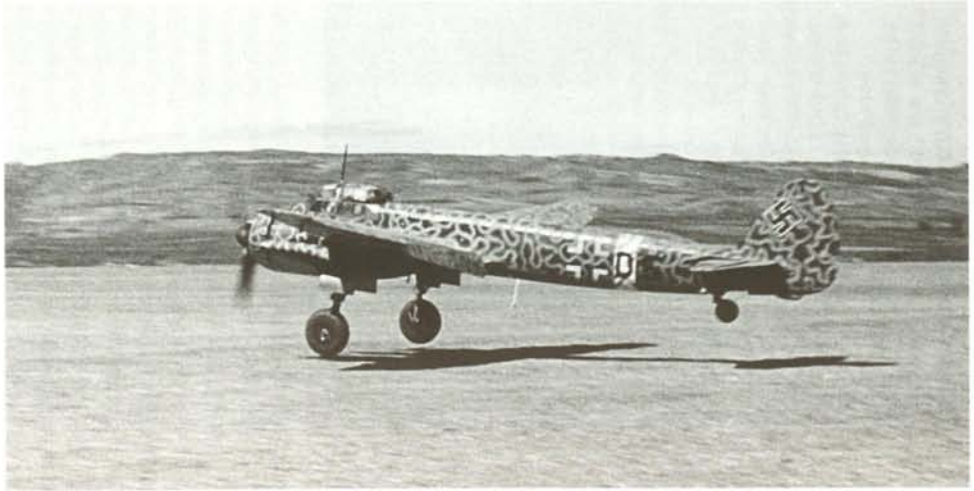
KG 40 was now commanded by the experienced former *Gruppen Kommandeur* of II./KG 26, *Oberst* Martin Vetter. I *Gruppe,* commanded by *Maj* Karl Henkelmann, was still operating from Norway only to be withdrawn to Germany (via Stalingrad), together with crews from *Hptm* Walter Rieder's 8./KG 40, to undergo training on the new Heinkel 177. However, aircraft from *Hptm* Kurt Herzog's 2 *Staffel* still operated with III. *Gruppe* until the end of 1943 when there was yet another reorganisation of KG 40. II. *Gruppe*, commanded by *Hptm* Martin Köstner, was still flying the Dornier 217 on conventional bombing attacks for IX. *Fliegerkorps*; in June 1943 it would convert to the Messerschmitt 410 and was re-designated V./KG 2. A new II. *Gruppe* would not be formed until October 1943 when it was re-formed from the Heinkel 177 development unit KG 50 under the leadership of *Maj* Rudolf Mons.

It therefore comes as no surprise that the two remaining *Gruppen* were *Maj* Robert Kowalewski's III. *Gruppe* and *Maj* Alfred Hemm's V *Gruppe* that were carrying out most if not almost all of *Fliegerführer Atlantik's* tasks: tasks that became increasingly vital as the U-boat war escalated. For the first half of the year, the air war over the Bay of Biscay appeared normal but surviving German logbooks show a marked increase in operational sorties from 1 May 1943 onwards. For V./KG 40, these tasks were predominantly in direct support of the U-boats, with the Junkers 88s carrying out close escort for the U-boats and sweeps well ahead of submarines transiting into and out of the Bay of Biscay. All of this was in direct response to the sudden escalation of the Battle of the Atlantic, which, according to the RAF, started 31 May 1943.

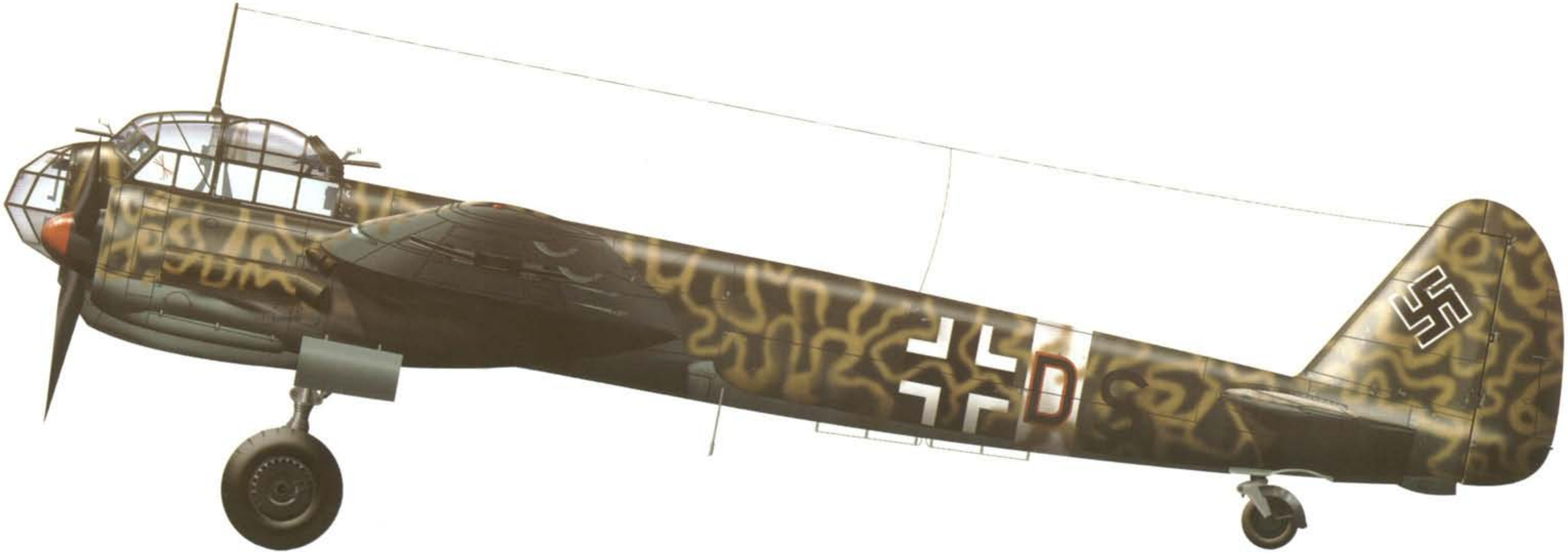
BELOW: Members of I./KG 77 seen planning a torpedo attack. Oblt Sommer (IA), Major Willi Sölter, Kommandeur of I./KG 77, Fw Schmidt (Sölter's Bordfunker), Lt Kurt Becker and Uffz Franke.

Many incidents occurred in the following months for both the Condor and Junkers 88 crews but one incident still causes controversy today. On 29 May 1943, it was announced that U-boat tactics in the Bay of Biscay would change with effect from 3 June 1943 in that U-boats from then on would transit the Bay of Biscay in groups of two or three and if attacked were to fight it out on the surface. In preparation for this change, on 1 June 1943, V./KG 40 intensified its missions which unfortunately for the Allies was a day when a number of Allied military and a single civilian aircraft were in the Bay.

The first losses that day were two Wellingtons of 420 Squadron headed for North Africa. The first Wellington, flown by Sgt Alex Sodero was quickly shot down by *Oblt* Hermann Horstmann, *Staffel Kapitän* of 13./KG 40 at

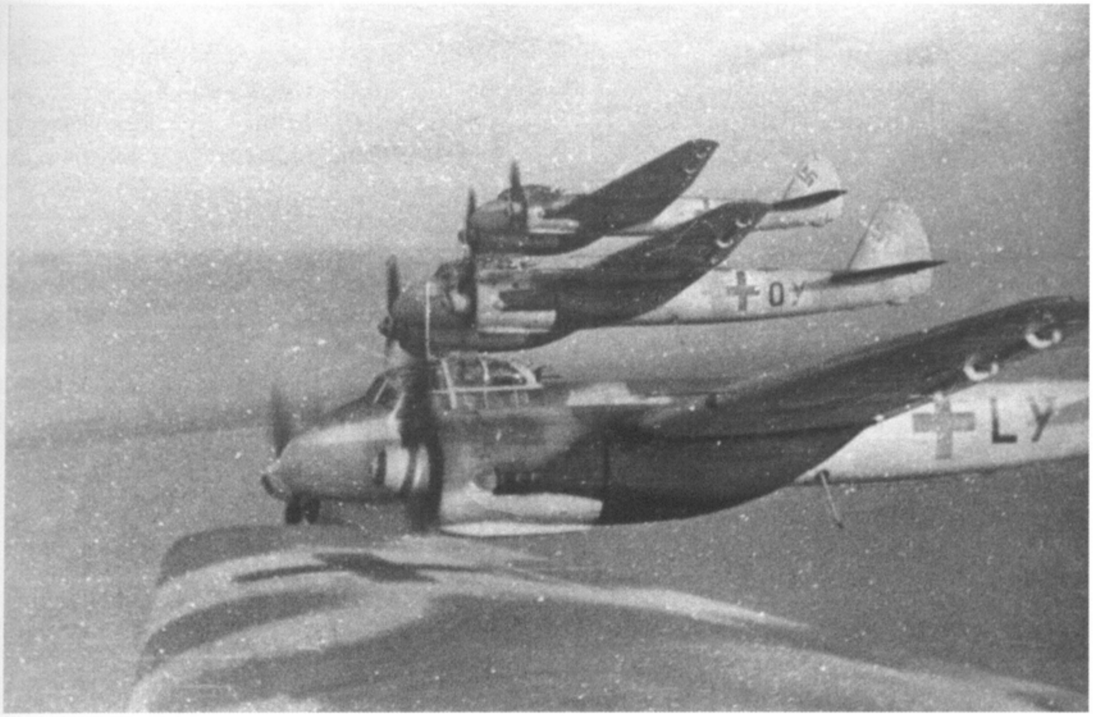


LEFT: This Ju 88 A-4 of 8./KG 77 is just touching down after returning from a mission somewhere in Italy. This machine appears to be fairly new, as it has not suffered from the normal wear and tear often associated with aircraft in operational use. The engines have been fitted with flame-dampers, which were also painted to match the uppersurfaces.



Junkers Ju 88 A-4 of 8./KG 77 coded +DS

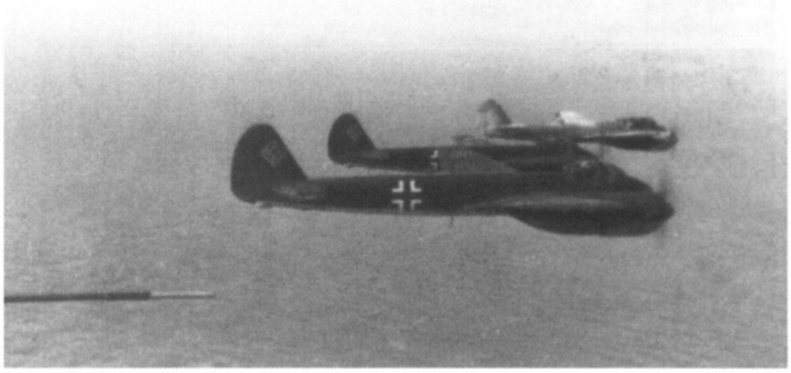
The 'Arabesken' pattern of RLM 79 light sand-yellow had been meticulously applied with the machine having then been thoroughly cleaned and lightly polished afterwards. The unit code '3Z' had been overpainted, but the Staffel letter 'S' was retained in black as was the individual aircraft letter 'D' which was thinly outlined in red. The white Mediterranean Theatre band that was applied to the original RLM 72/73 scheme has also been retained but overpainted in RLM 79 light sand-yellow. The spinner tips may have been painted in the red Staffel colour.



LEFT: 14./KG 40 Ju 88 C-6s over the Bay of Biscay in 1943. Note that all four aircraft are camouflaged and coded in a similar scheme to Ju 88 night fighters. Note the unusual style of the letter 'Y'.

0805 hours. 15 minutes later, a second Wellington flown by Fg Off Gordon McCulloch was shot down by *Uffz* Heinz Hommel:

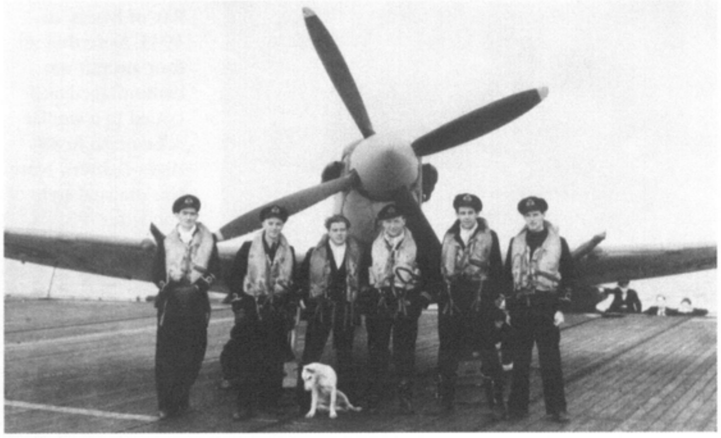
> *"After sighting the Wellington, my* Rottenführer *climbed over the enemy plane and attacked from the front and above. I had to break off my first attack because of the enemy plane's evasive actions and I got into its rear turret's field of fire…During this first action, my plane was hit by one bullet in the port wing. A short time after that, I was able to get into a favourable position and attacked head on from above, watching the cannon and machine gun hits on the enemy's starboard wing. From a distance of 100 metres, I saw a tongue of flame coming out from the wing which became larger. Soon the whole wing was ablaze and then broke off. The plane went into a spin and exploded on hitting the water…"*



ABOVE: Ju 88 C-6s of V./KG 40 over the Bay of Biscay. Note the mix of camouflage within this Staffel.

13./KG 40 returned triumphantly from what was their 500th mission to be replaced by eight aircraft from 14 *Staffel* led by *Oblt* Herbert Hintze. Their task was to search for two U-boats returning off patrol but because of poor weather further out into the Atlantic, the Junkers 88s called off their search and carried out a general search, during which they spotted an unidentified aircraft flying north. This was a Douglas DC-3 of KLM Royal Dutch Airlines returning to the UK from Lisbon in Portugal with a crew of three and carrying 13 passengers. *Oblt* Hintze recalls what happened next:

> *"The aircraft was flying on a reciprocal course towards us. I saw her as a grey silhouette from a range of 2-3,000 metres. Oblt Bellstedt radioed 'Indians at 11 o'clock; attack, attack!', markings were not visible but considering the silhouette and construction, it was an enemy aircraft.*
>
> *"Bellstedt and* Lt *Wittmer-Eigenbrodt who had been flying as the Lookout* Rotte *above the rest of us attacked from above, the rest of us intended attacking from below. By the time we got within range, Bellstedt had attacked and set the port engine and wing on fire and as we closed up, I saw that the aircraft was a DC-3 and had civil markings. I immediately ordered cease fire. I saw what*



ABOVE: Pilots of 808 Squadron on board HMS Battler in January of 1943. From left to right are S/Lt J. Macdonald, S/Lt E. Philpott, S/Lt P. Constable, Lt Cdr Wallace, S/Lt G. Holyoak, S/Lt A.G. Penney. The two pilots responsible for shooting down Ofw Georg Abel and his crew from 7./KG 40 on 24 June 1943 are Lt Constable and S/Lt Penney.

appeared to be three parachutes emerge from the aircraft which didn't open as they were burning and the plane went into a flat turn and ditched, floating for a short while before sinking. There were no signs of survivors..."

Conjecture remains to this day as to whether the *Luftwaffe* had deliberately shot down a civil aircraft but the fact remains that as one of the passengers was the world-famous actor Leslie Howard, this incident will continue to be remembered and to provoke debate. Incidentally, it was not the last Allied loss that day: a Handley Page Halifax of 58 Squadron was shot down by *Hptm* Hans Morr and *Lt* Lothar Wolff of 15./KG 40; each *Staffel* of V./KG 40 had succeeded in shooting down Allied aircraft on 1 June 1943.

For the Focke-Wulf 200s of III./KG 40, the Bay of Biscay was becoming increasingly dangerous as well. With the RAF increasing the patrols of Beaufighters and even De Havilland Mosquitos, losses would occur. The first Condor lost to aircraft occurred on 12 March 1943 when four Beaufighters shot down *Lt* Ernst Rabolt and his crew from 7./KG 40; there were no survivors from the one-sided combat. Even further out into the Atlantic, the Condor was not safe as *Ofw* Georg Abel and his crew, also from 7./KG 40 found to their cost on 24 June 1943, as Sub Lt. Gordon Penney recalls:

> *"HMS* Battler *was escorting convoy OS49/KMS 16 and carried six Swordfish of 835 Squadron and four Seafires of 808 Squadron in addition to many Hurricanes destined for Malta which would be flown off by RAF pilots.*
>
> *"Throughout daylight hours, two Seafires were at readiness to fly off. On 10 June, the CO and I were scrambled to intercept a reported BV 138 which turned out to be a Whitley on convoy patrol showing no IFF. When we returned, the sea had worsened and the ship was pitching badly. The parked aircraft had been moved forward of the barrier which was up. The CO landed and was pushed forward of the barrier. I followed but my aircraft was pitched into the air by the ship's stern rising. The hook caught the top wire of the barrier and my aircraft slammed down on the CO's (fortunately he was not in it!). Two badly damaged Seafires were pushed over the side..."*
>
> *"24 June: With only a few minutes to go to sunset, we saw a FW 200 flying over the convoy and were scrambled.* Lt Constable *asked me to lead as he had lost sight of the Fw. We climbed to a position above and astern of the enemy aircraft (at about 5000-6000 feet. Constable made a stern attack and I followed. Tracer from the rear gun ceased about half way through my attack. Breaking away, I saw the port wing of the Fw ablaze. Constable made another attack and followed the Fw nearly to sea-level. I returned to* Battler *and landed in the fading light, followed by Constable who confirmed the kill.."*

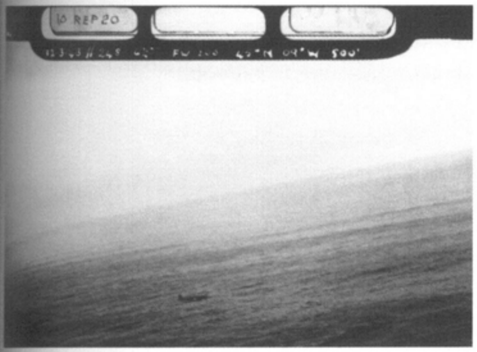
BELOW: A rare air combat kill for a Condor. A 295 Squadron Halifax shot down by Hptm Georg Schabert of 7./KG 40, on 14 June 1943; there were no survivors.

However, there were still some spectacular successes for III./KG 40. On 8 July 1943, the 16,792 GRT luxury passenger liner *California*, together with the *Duchess of York* (20,021 GRT) and the *Port Fairy* (8,072 GRT), left the Clyde escorted by the destroyer HMS *Douglas* and the frigate HMS *Moyola* as part of convoy 'Faith'. The *California* was carrying a crew of 316 (including 25 gunners to man her armaments), together with 449 passengers and two RN signalmen.

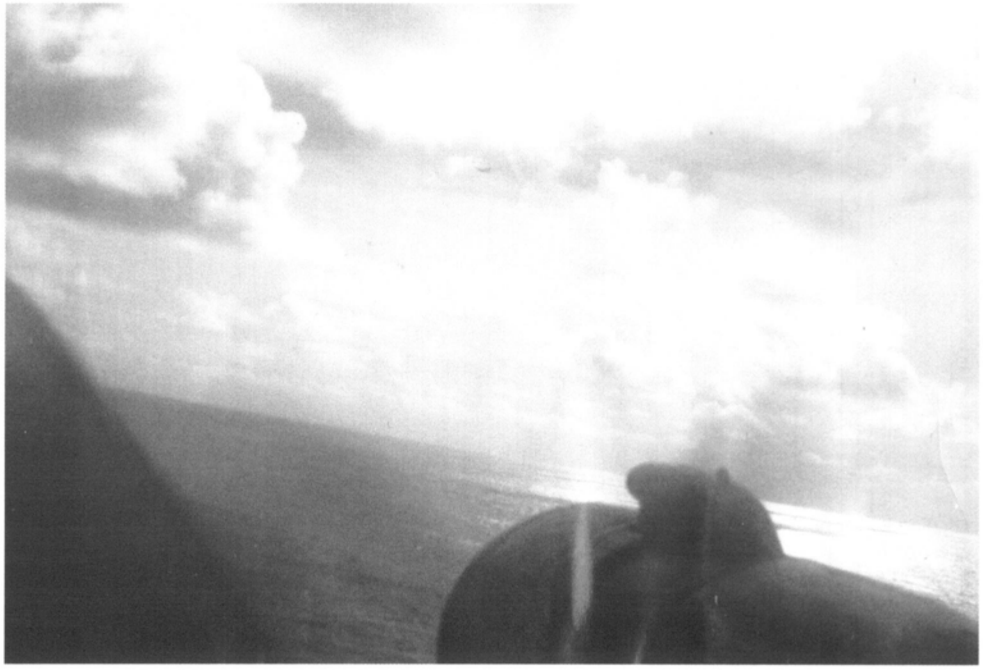
At 2000 hrs on 10 July the convoy made rendezvous with a Canadian destroyer, HMCS *Iroquois*, some 500 miles south-west of Land's End and then sailed south, planning to join HMS *Swale* off the Iberian coast in 24 hours' time.

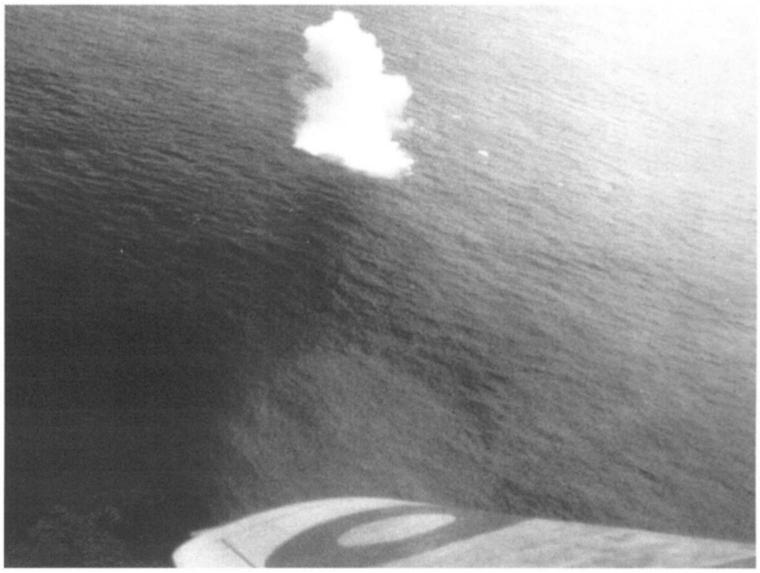
All went without incident until 1850 hrs on 11 July whilst 350 miles off the Portuguese coast when an unidentified aircraft was reported in

OPPOSITE RIGHT
Death of a Condor
Last moments of
Fw 200 C-4,
W.Nr. 0186, coded
F8+ER of 7./KG 4
as it is shot down
by four
Beaufighters of
248 Squadron over
the Atlantic on
12 March 1943.
None of Lt Ernst
Rabolt's crew
survived. The
Condor was
extremely
vunerable to
fighter attack due
to its lack of
armour and the
fact that all its fuel
lines were on the
underside of the
aircraft.

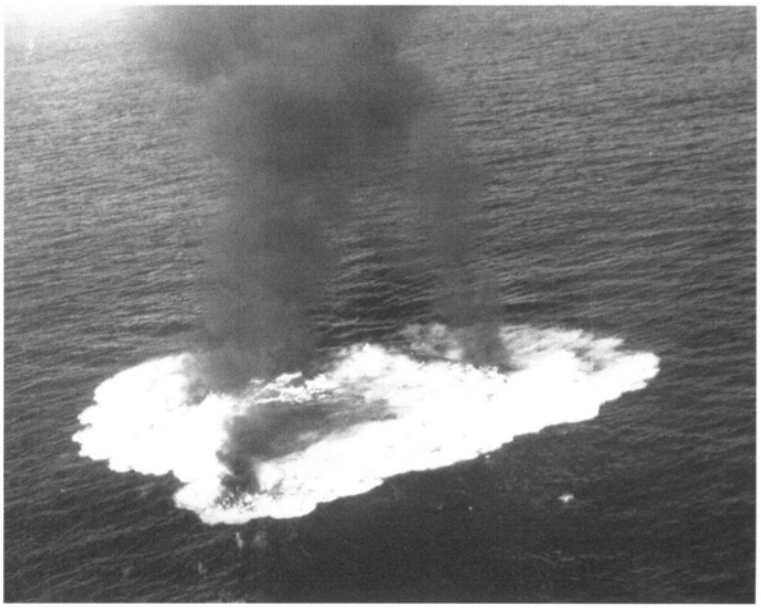


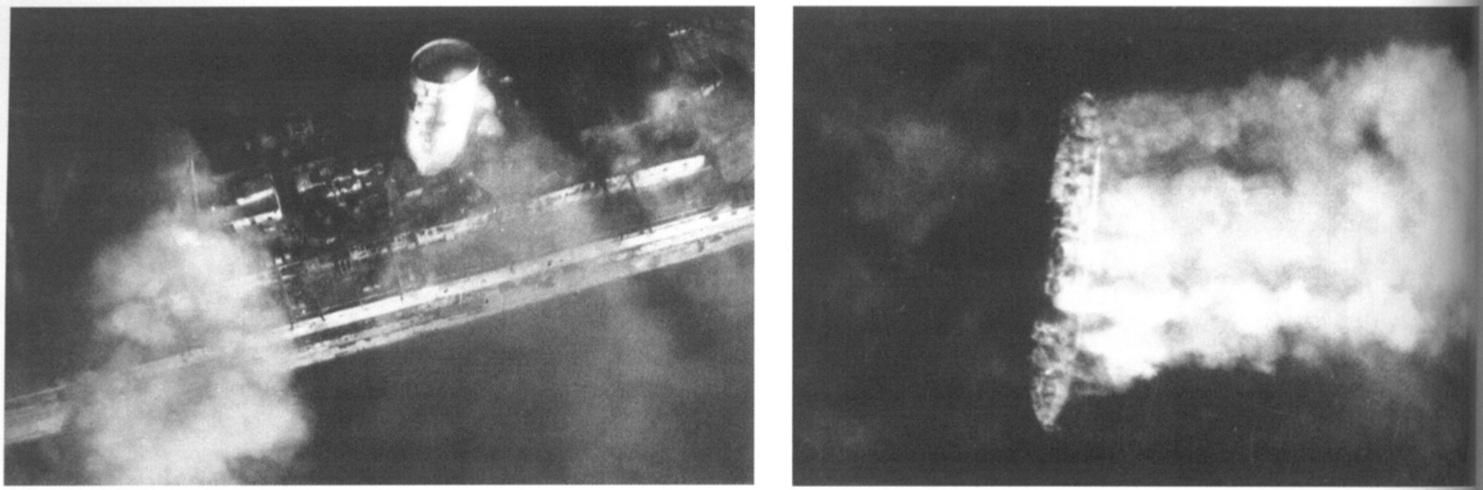
11 REP 20
12.3.43/248 6¼" FW 200 45°N 09°W 500'





ABOVE AND IMMEDIATE LEFT: Pictures taken from a 248 Squadron Beaufighter showing the shooting down of a Ju 88 D-1 W.Nr. 430598, coded 4U+EL of 3./123 on 29 July 1943. In the photograph above the Junkers can be seen in the middle distance. The pilot, Lt Gerhard Möbius and the three crew were killed.





ABOVE: Result of an attack by 7./KG 40 on 11 July 1943. The photographs show the burning liner Duchess of York, attacked by Oblt Ludwig Progner, Hptm Helmut Liman and Oblt Egon Scherret.

the vicinity; action stations were ordered and all water-tight doors and openings were ordered to be closed. At 1930 hrs an unidentified plane was sighted from the *California* approaching from the south. Having levelled with the ship, the plane turned away and, gaining height, flew into the sun and was lost to view.

The convoy had been detected by the *Luftwaffe* and three Condors from 7./KG 40 commanded by *Hptm* Helmut Liman, *Oblt* Ludwig Progner and *Oblt* Egon Scherret had been sent to investigate. At 2010 hrs they commenced their attacks, each aircraft dropping four 250 kg bombs from high altitude and with extreme accuracy. Plt Off Peter Dyson was a passenger on the *Duchess of York*:

> *"There was a series of explosions, all the lights went out and the mirrors shattered. I was unhurt and soon scrambled up and out onto the promenade deck, to see the ship ablaze from amidships to the stern. We had been hit by a string of three bombs dropped by Condors. Both the other ships were also ablaze, the convoy had been wiped out. We discovered years later that we were off the coast of Portugal and thought to be out of range of the Condors, but it was supposed that these had been based in "neutral" Spain, though whether that was actually so I never heard. The other troopship was the* California, *many of the passengers on which were civilians, including a lot of young Irish nuns bound for missions in Africa. After the war I discovered that an old school friend was killed on the* California, *he was in the colonial service. The third ship was a "fast cargo-liner" and she survived, the fires were extinguished and a destroyer towed her into Casablanca a few days later.*
>
> *"Although I have forgotten many of the details of my service life, the events of the next few weeks are as clear as ever and I could write many pages about them. Briefly, I was picked up by a lifeboat and transferred via scrambling nets to a Royal Navy frigate which picked up several hundred survivors. After two days we docked at Casablanca and we survivors were taken over by the US army and housed in a tented transit camp."*

The convoy responded with a heavy barrage of anti-aircraft fire but the *Duchess of York* was immediately enveloped in flames. The *California* then had a near miss which tore a 100 ft long hole in her starboard side above the waterline. Soon afterwards the *California* was attacked a second time, being hit by two bombs, one of which hit in No 2 hold and the other between the funnel and the bridge; a third bomb went into the sea but blew a hole in the starboard side in the vicinity of No 7 hold.

According to the Captain's report, the *California's* engines were undamaged in the attack but the steering gear was put out of action and all communication with the bridge was lost except for the engine room telegraph. However, the real threat was from fire for, as he reported, "the whole vessel appeared to be blazing". After the second hit, he ordered the engines to be stopped and the boats lowered. Though at first it was hoped that it might still be possible to save the ship, the fire and heat were so terrific that it was obvious that the situation was hopeless and the order to abandon ship was given. Of 30 lifeboats on the ship, 17 got away safely as well as a number of rafts. 45 crew and 21 passengers were eventually reported missing and one man subsequently died in hospital. It was a similar story on the *Duchess of York*: 27 passengers and crew lost their lives.

The attack, from just under 5,000 metres, was a spectacular success, lasting a little less than 30 minutes during which time six attacking runs were made and 14 bombs were said to have been

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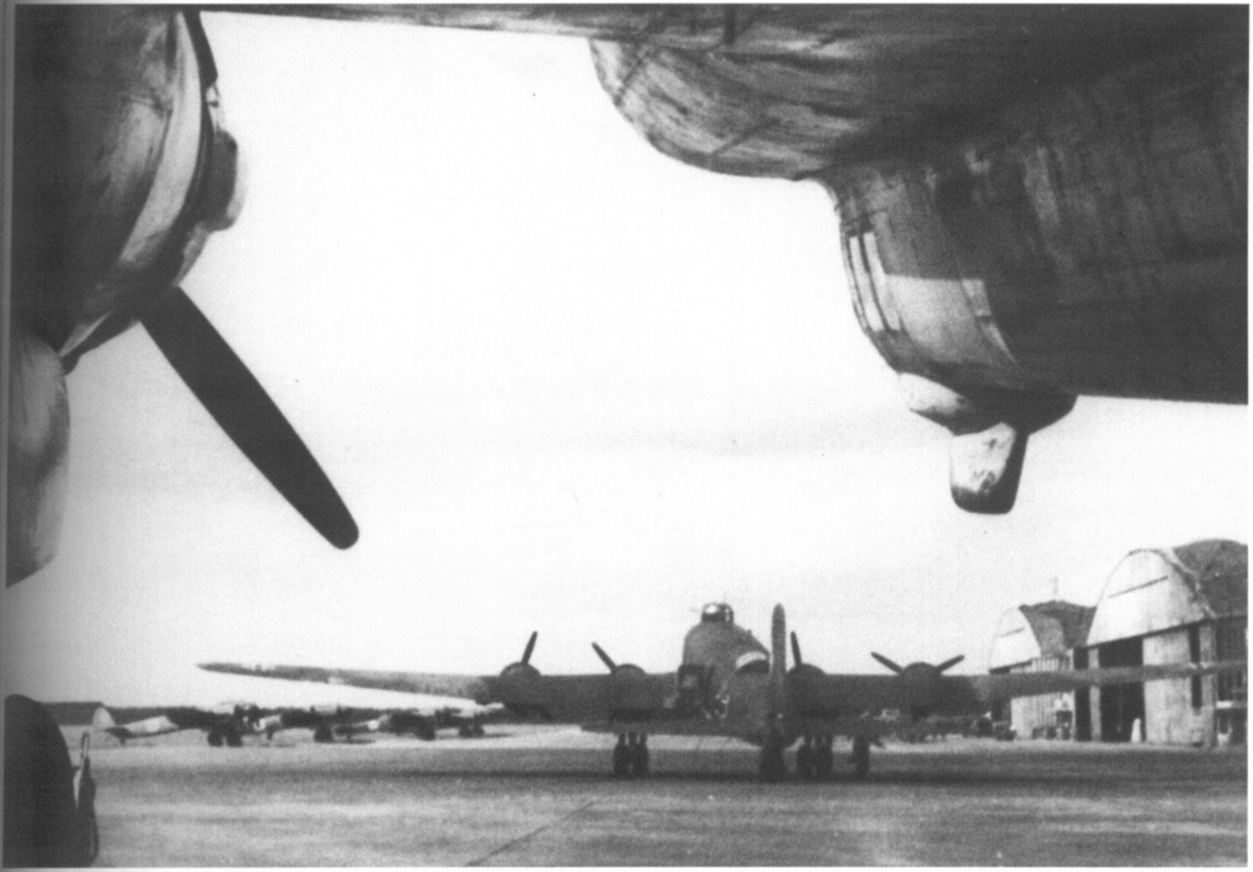
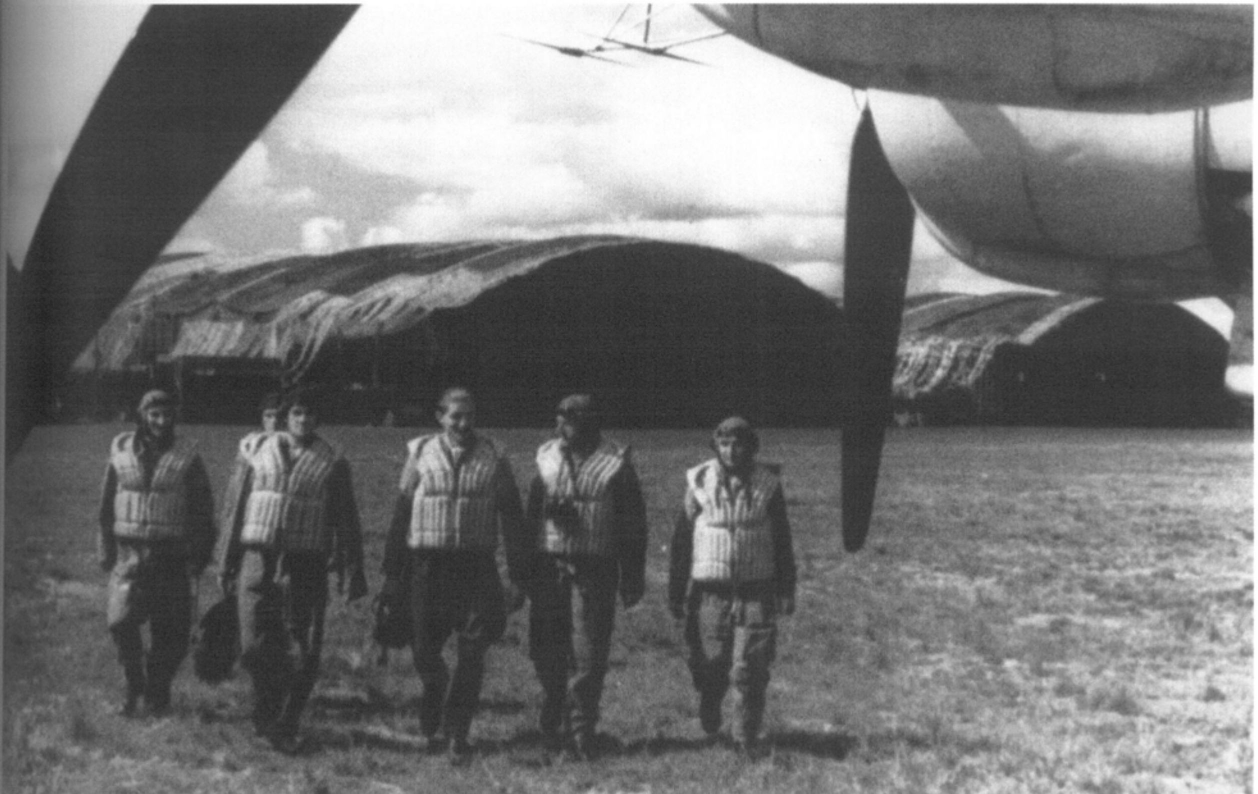
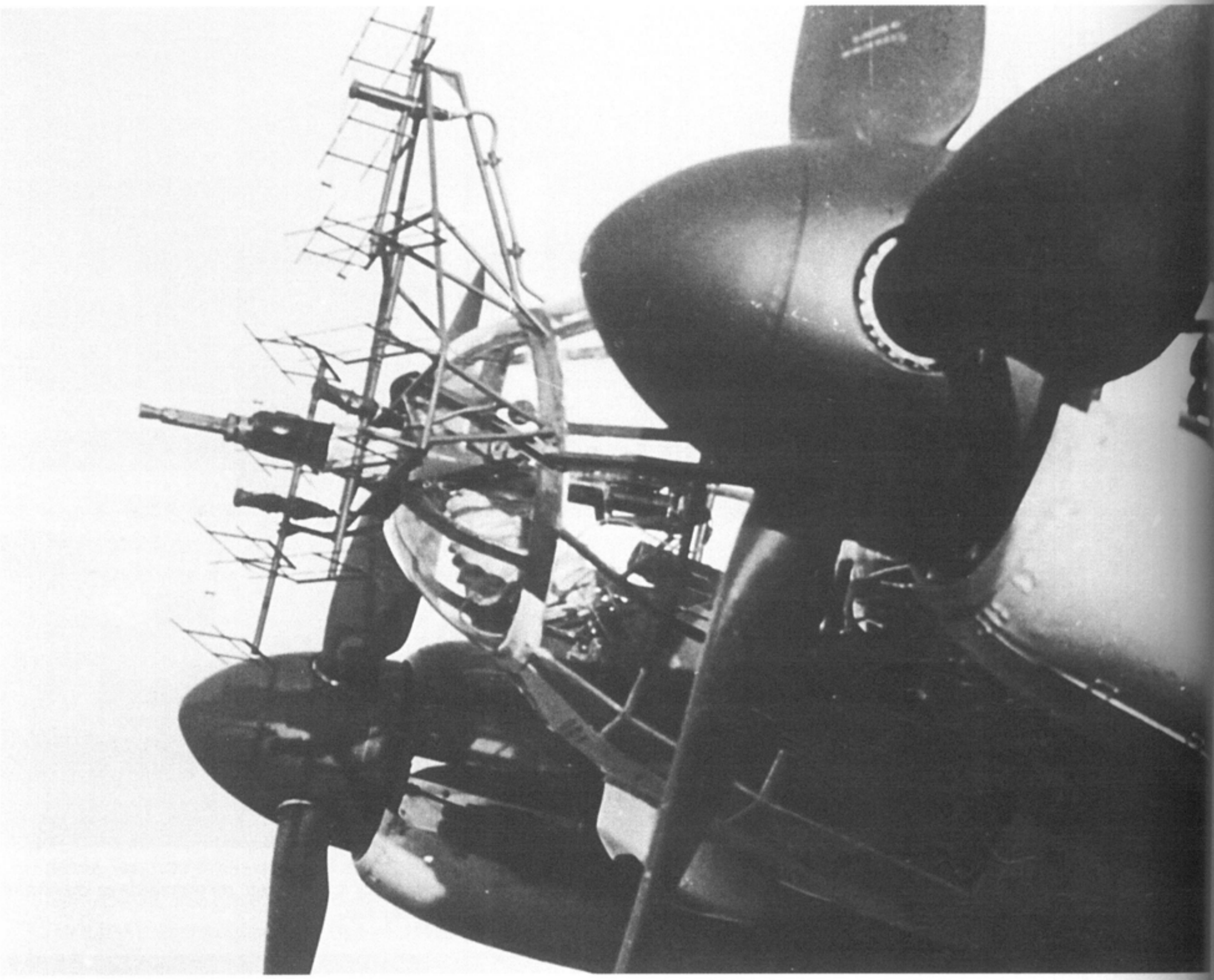


ABOVE: Seen in the background is a Fw 200 C-5 of 7./KG 40 at Bordeaux in 1943. The C-5 variant was a long-range reconnaissance version of the Condor. Note the Lotfe 7D bombsight in the aircraft in the foreground and the Ju 88 C-6s on the left.

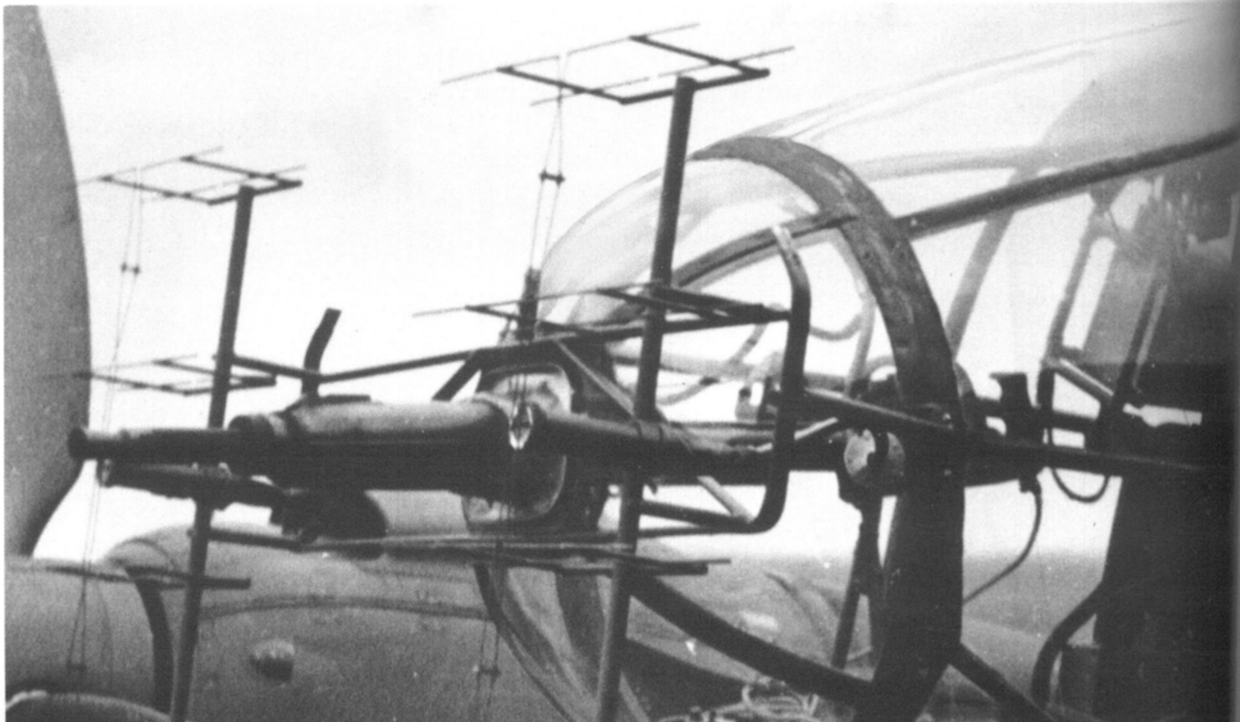


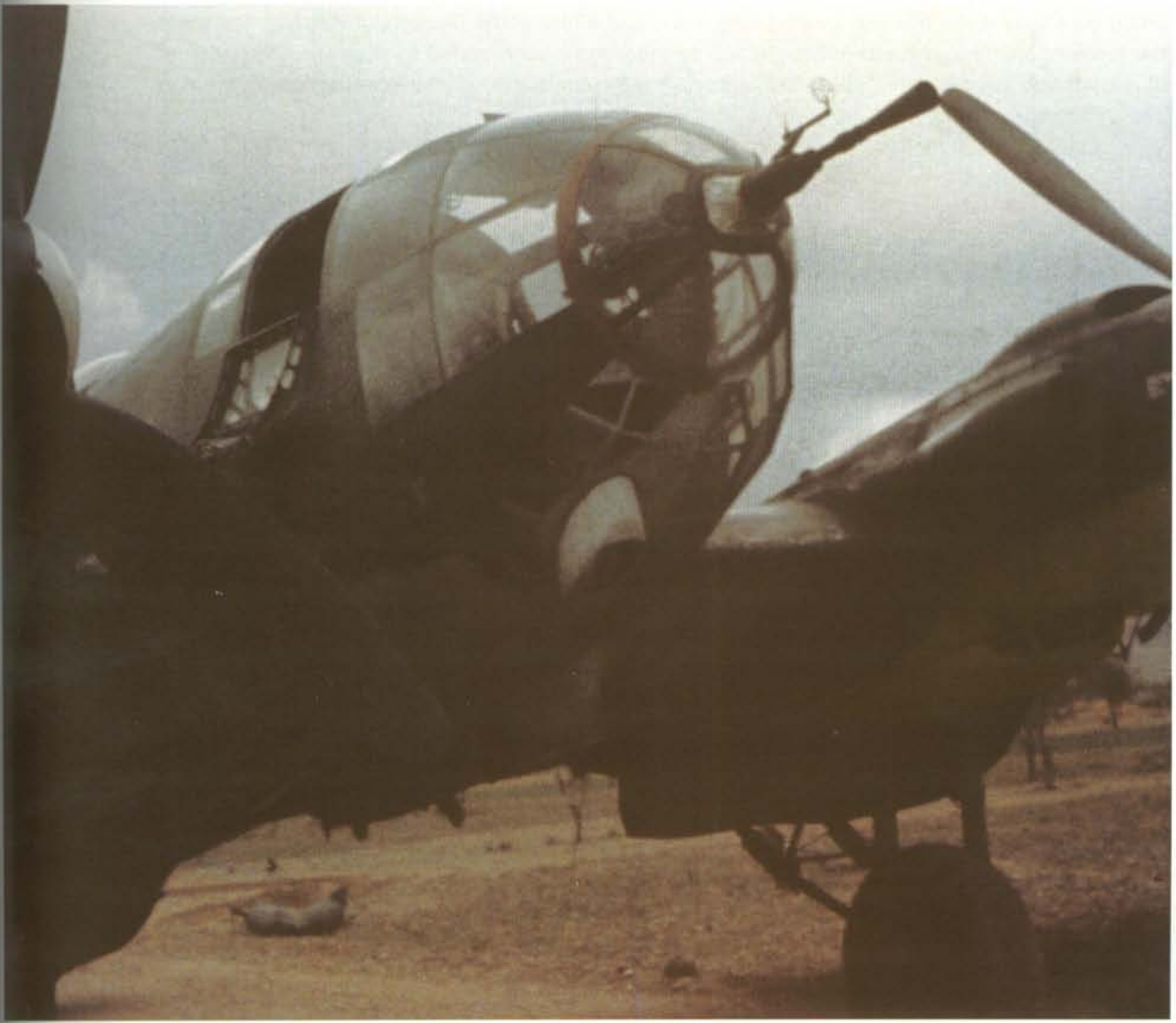
ABOVE: Six unidentified crew from 7./KG 40 stroll towards their Condor. Four of the visible crew are wearing the K So/34 one-piece flight suits with the kapok-filled Schwimmweste 10-76. The pilot is probably the individual in the middle wearing the uniform breeches. All with the exception of the pilot are wearing a mixture of LKp S 100 and LKp N 101 flying helmets with Nitsche & Günther flying goggles. Note the FuG Rostock search radar just visible on the nose of the aircraft.

RIGHT: FuG 200 Hohentwiel ship search radar mounted on the nose framework of a He 111. Note the MG FF cannon.

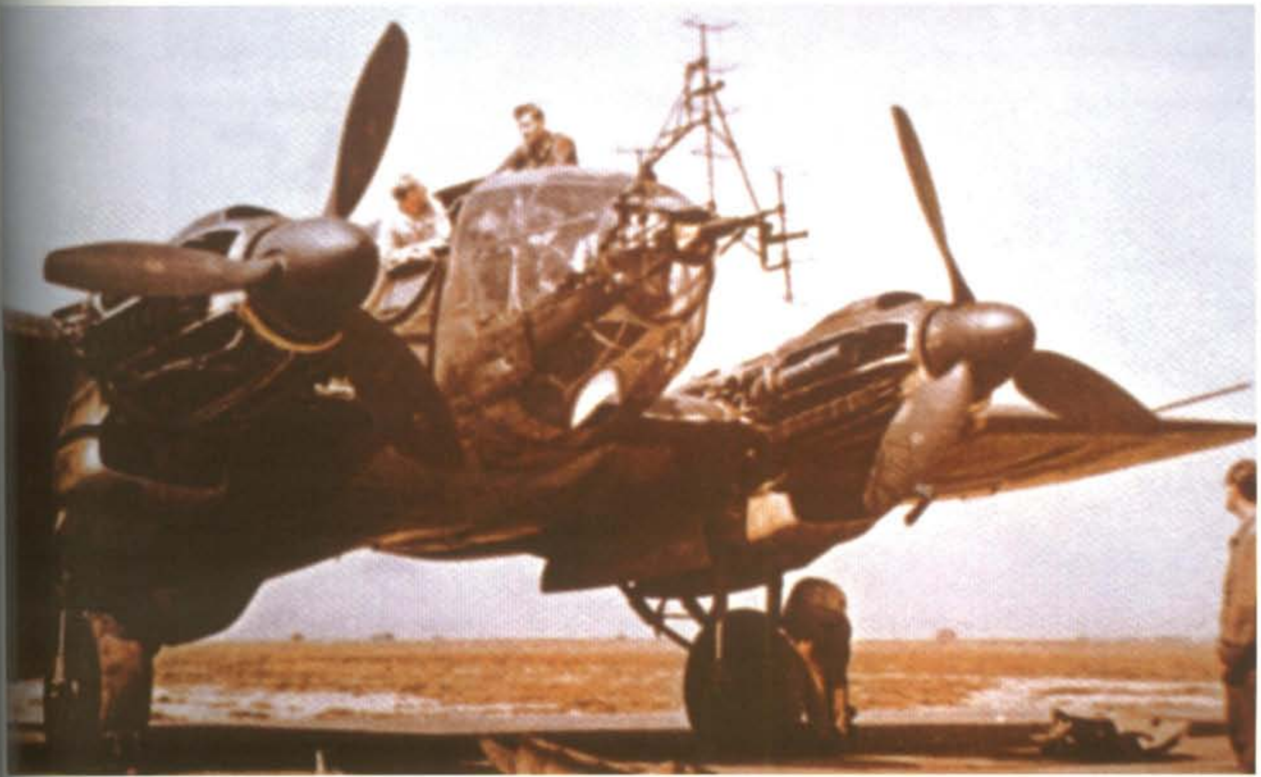


RIGHT: During the development of the FuG 200 radar, several alternative aerial designs were undertaken and fitted to the He 111 H. This particular design allowed for the MG FF cannon in the nose to be used at its maximum firing angles.





LEFT: This colour photograph of an He 111 H-6 was taken at Kalamaki, Greece in 1943. The aircraft belonged to 5./KG 100. Note the yellow painted lower engine cowls, red painted circular framing on the nose glazing and the flash protector over the muzzle of the MG 151 cannon barrel.

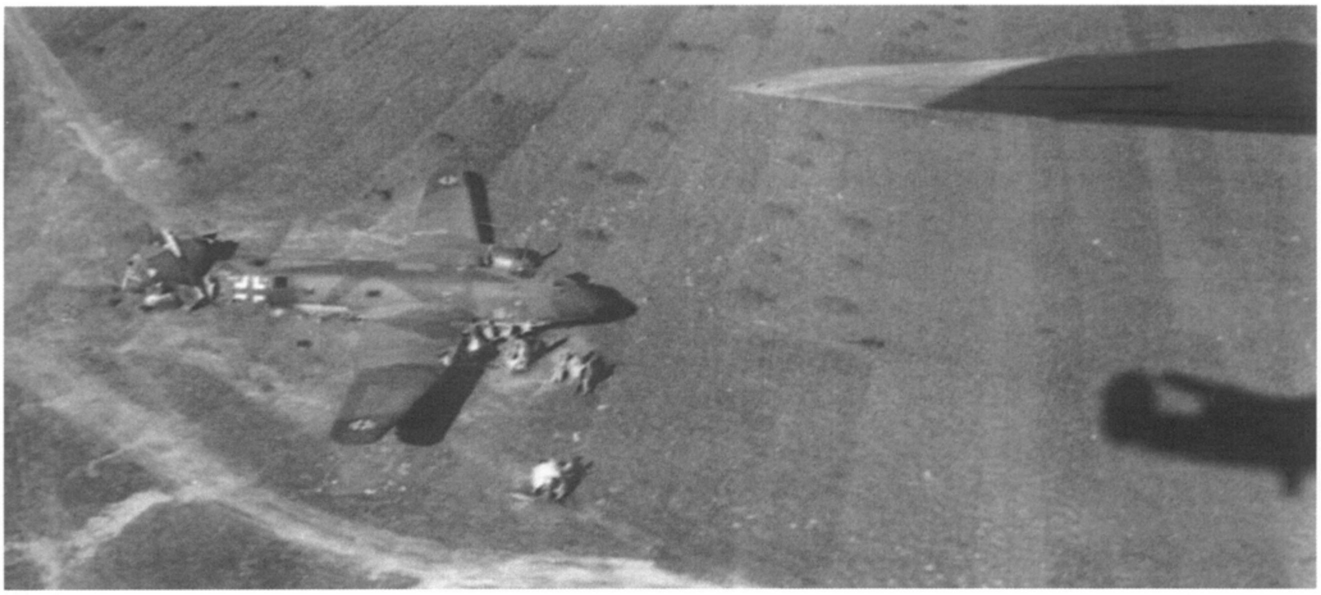


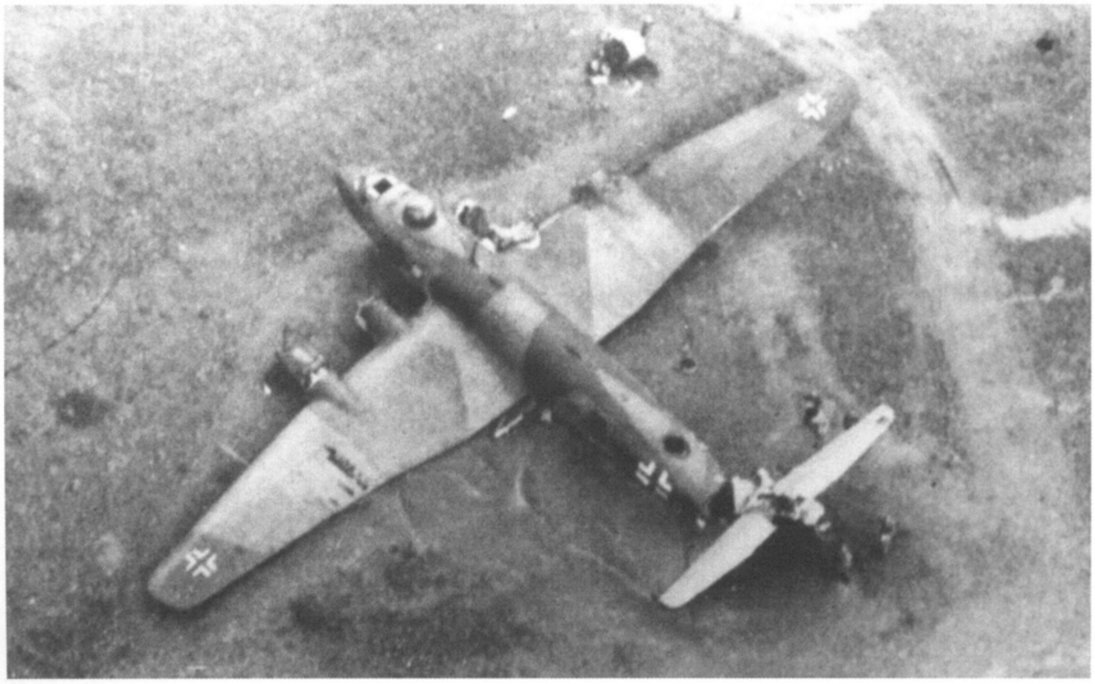
LEFT: A Heinkel He 111 of KG 26 fitted with FuG 200 Hohentwiel ship search radar.

dropped - 4 were direct hits and 10 were near misses. The hulk of the *Duchess of York* was still afloat the following morning and was photographed by the Condor commanded by *Hptm* Paul Husslein of III./KG 40 who was possibly responsible for damaging the only surviving ship from the convoy, the *Port Fairy,* that same day.

Such successes were few and far between as *Uffz* Werner Zerrahn of 9./KG 40 recalls:

> *"13 August 1943: In almost all cases, we had been briefed to fly an armed reconnaissance sortie over the Bay of Biscay as far as to the Azores. Flights like this had a duration of about 10 - 12 hours and our aircraft carried four 250 kg bombs and later two Henschel Hs 293A radio-controlled missiles.*
>
> *"During our approach, we were able to make out a convoy and reported its position to Bordeaux by sending a coded radio message. Only a few minutes later, a B-24 Liberator appeared which caused a lot of trouble. The enemy's speed was considerably higher than ours and we received many hits. Our gunner* Obgefr *Heinz Wagner was wounded and holes in the fuel tanks caused the loss of quite an amount of fuel.*





ABOVE AND RIGHT: On 13 August 1943 Fw 200 C-5/U1, W.Nr. 0221 of 9./KG 40 was damaged in combat with a B-24 Liberator of the 1st Squadron/480th Anti-Submarine Group (captained by Lt F W McKinnon) and force-landed at Camarinas in Spain. Oblt Günther Seide and his crew were quickly repatriated. Note the shadow of the Liberator on the ground in the picture above, clearly showing its belly-mounted AN/APS 15 search radar.

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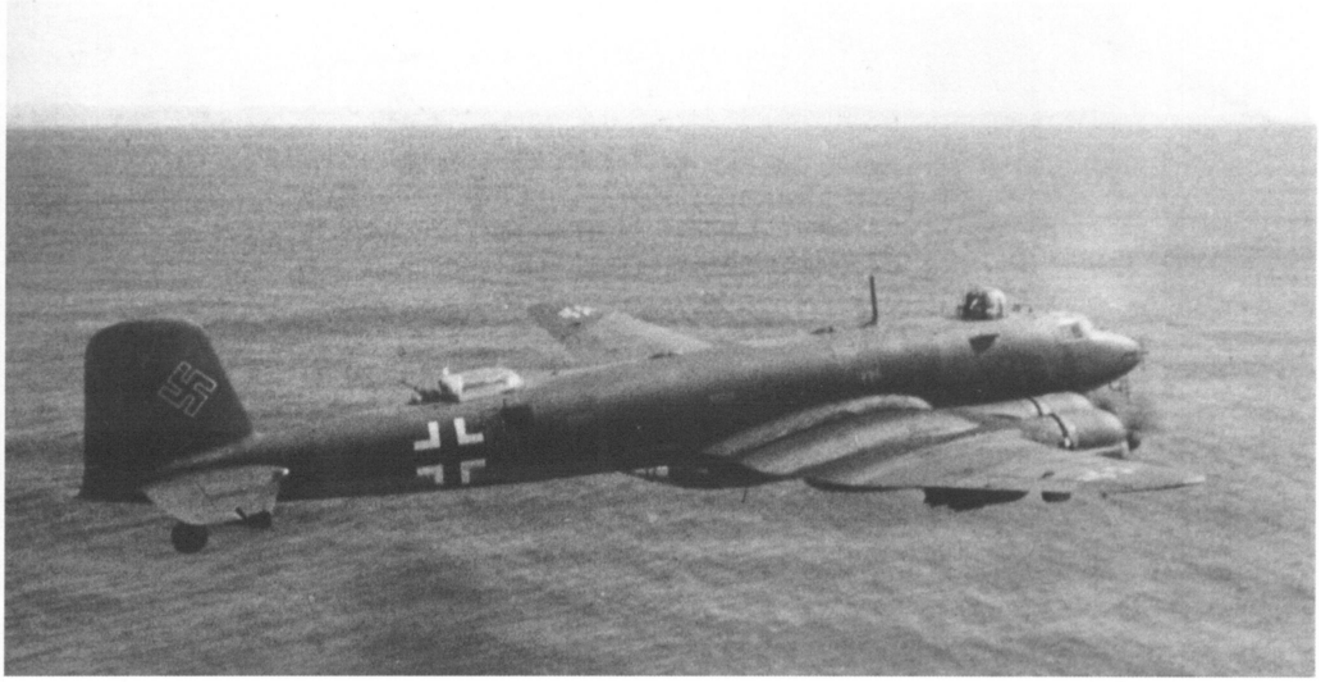


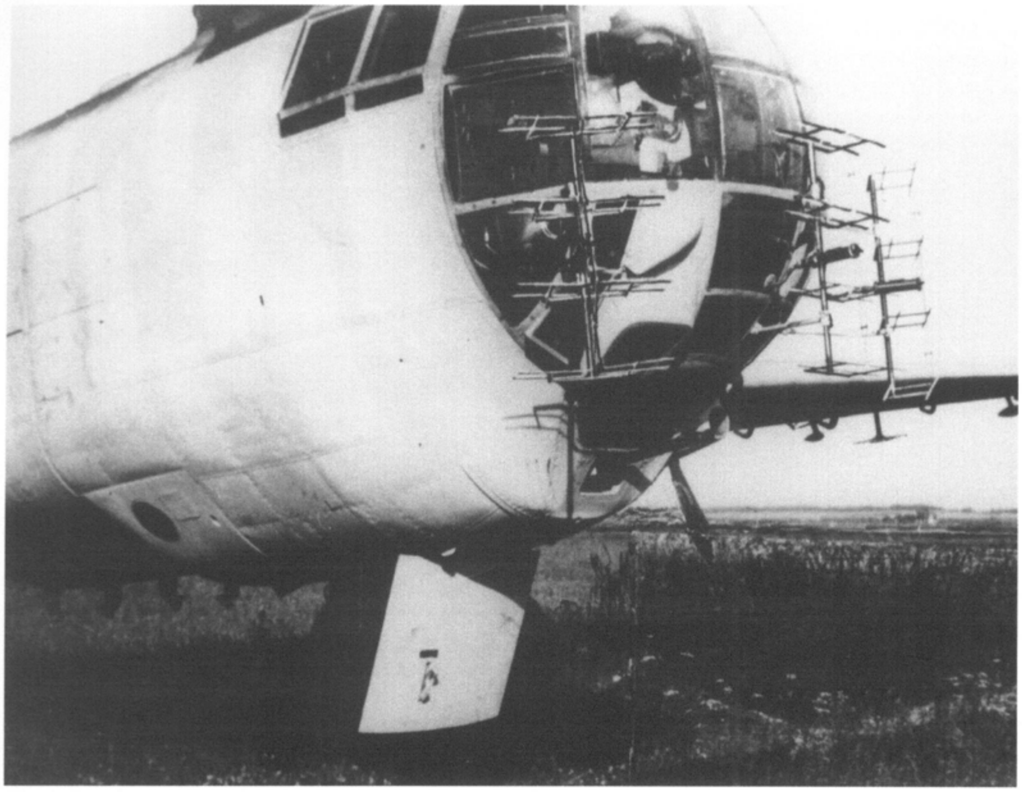
ABOVE:
Fw 200 C-5, W.Nr. 0214, coded F8+NT of 9./KG 40 was lost on 23 August 1943 when it was forced to ditch. Ofw Alfred Billing and five crew were rescued, but one crewman was lost, Ofw. Hans Gentsch, the flight engineer. Note the fins of the two bombs in the outboard position under the starboard wing.

> *"Fortunately, we reached a layer of cloud and with the last drop of fuel we were able to make a good belly-landing in a harvested field of maize near La Coruna in Spain. After spending a few days in La Coruna and Valladolid, we came to Madrid and two weeks later, we arrived back at Bordeaux."*

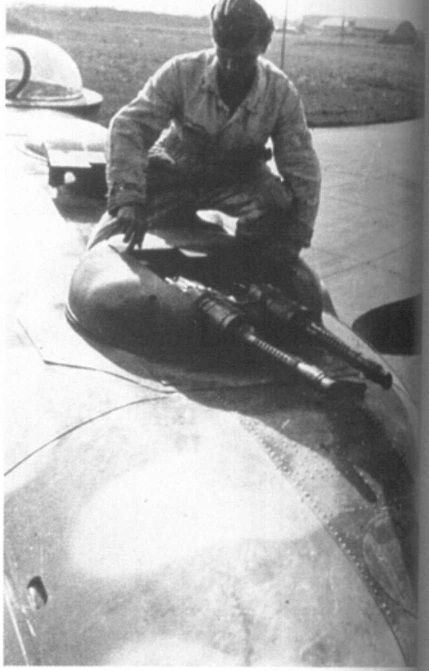
This was the third of what would be five combats between the 480th Anti-Submarine Group and KG 40. On 28 July 1943 1/Lt. Elbert Hyde shot down *Ofw* Rudolf Waschek and his crew from 2./KG 40; three days later it was the turn of Capt Gerald Mosier to shoot down *Oblt* Siegfried Gall's Condor from 7./KG 40, and then on 17 August, Capt Hugh Maxwell Jr shot down *Ofw* Karl Bauer of 2./KG 40 and badly damaged the Condor flown by *Oblt* Heinz Küchenmeister from the same *Staffel*, this Condor crash-landing back at Bordeaux. The B-24 also crashed with the deaths of three of the crew. On the 13 August, it was Capt Fred McKinnon who had a running battle with *Oblt* Günther Seide and his crew at altitudes ranging from 2,000 feet to sea level. The B-24's gunners expended no less than 1,790 rounds of .50 calibre ammunition; the Condor failed to hit the B-24 which eventually saw the German's No. 3 engine start to smoke and subsequently crash-land in Spain; McKinnon received the DFC for the action.

However, what is of note in Werner Zerrahn's account is the mention of radio-controlled missiles. By the summer of 1943, the *Luftwaffe* had two such air-launched guided weapons for anti-shipping operations. The first was the Ruhrstahl FX 1400 or *Fritz X* stand-off bomb which carried a 1,150 kg warhead (3,300 lb). *Fritz* X was released from altitudes between four to seven thousand metres (16,000 to 20,000 feet) and, falling at near terminal velocity, was guided by a bomb aimer who was aided by a flare in the tail of the bomb. The second weapon was the Henschel Hs 293 which carried a 500 kg warhead (1,100 lb), a small rocket motor accelerated the missile to about 600 km/h (370 mph) which cut out after 12 seconds and the bomb coasted into its target in a shallow glide, again guided by a bomb aimer who was also aided by a small flare in the tail of the bomb.

The units initially responsible for launching these new weapons were II. and III./KG 100. On 25 August 1943, 12 Dornier 217 E-5s from *Maj* Franz Hollweg's II./KG 100, which were based at Cognac, escorted by seven Junkers 88 C-6s from 15./KG 40, took off to attack a convoy off the Spanish coast with Hs 293As. The attack was not a total success, just damaging the warships *Bideford*, *Waveney* and *Landguard*. However, the following day, 15./KG 40 went looking for potential targets for the new bombs and having discovered six warships from the First Support Group, on 27 August 1943 escorted another 14 Dornier 217s. The sloop *Egret* was sunk by the *Geschwader Kommodore*, *Maj* Fritz Auffhammer and *Oblt* Paulus whilst the *Athabascan* was damaged by a bomb dropped by *Hptm.* Wolfgang Vorpahl, *Staffel Kapitän* of 5./KG 100. Greater success would occur on 9 September when three crews from *Maj* Bernhard Jope's III./KG 100, operating from Marseilles-Istres, sunk the Italian battleship *Roma* and severely damaged the *Italia* west of Corsica with *Fritz X.*

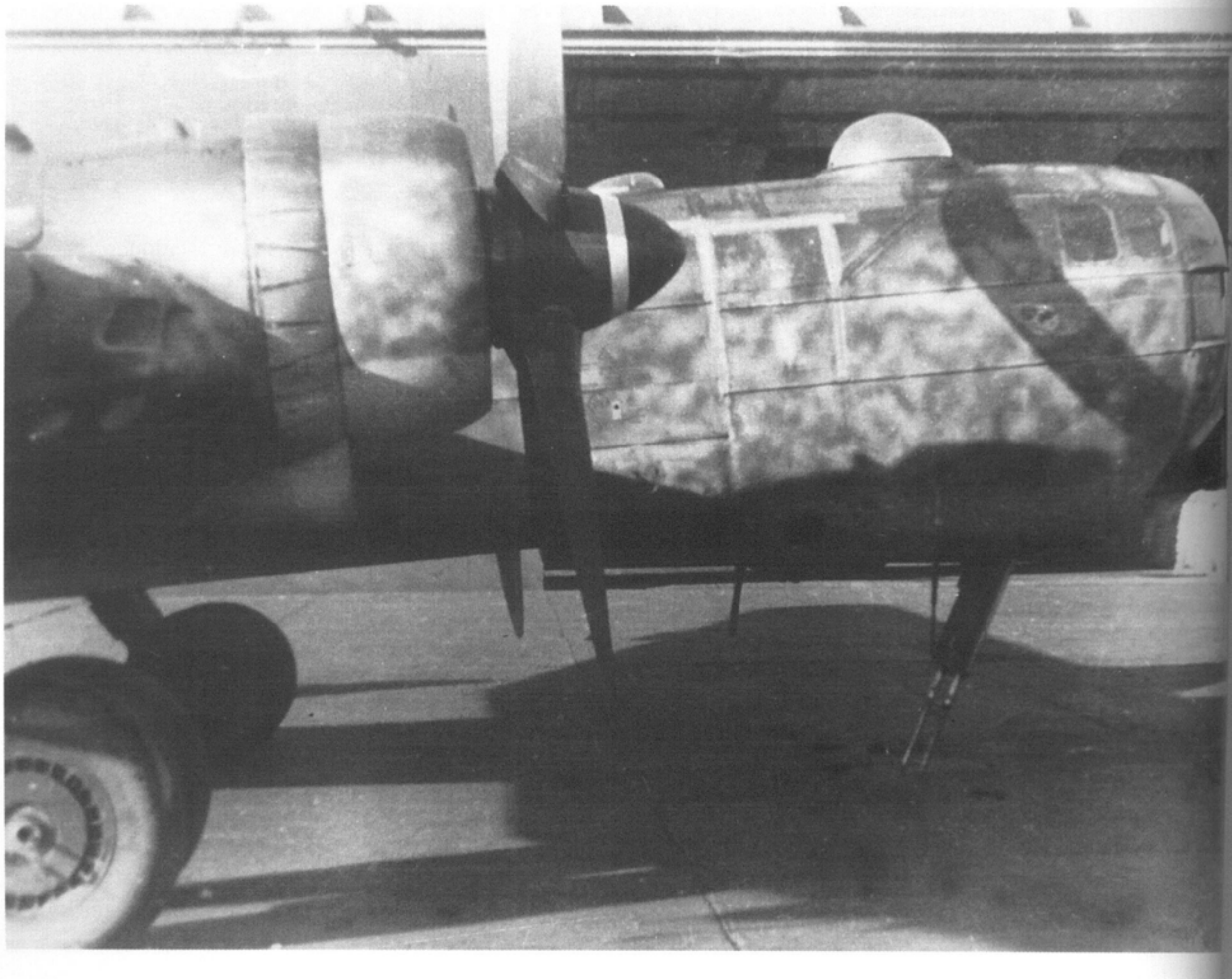


ABOVE: Heinkel He 177 A-5 of II./KG 40 with FuG 200 Hohentwiel ship search radar. Note the ETC bomb rack aft of the gondola.



ABOVE: A ground crewman services the twin remotely-controlled MG 131 machine guns in the B1-Stand atop a He 177. This turret was controlled by the gunner in the dome-like cupola behind.

RIGHT: A He 177 A-3 of 1./KG 40 is seen here stationed at Bordeaux-Merignac in the west of France during 1943. The Gruppe colour was probably white which explains why a narrow band has been applied around the spinner. A very small KG 40 emblem has also been painted just below the rear glazing of the cockpit. Note that some corrosion-resistant paint has been applied to some of the panel joints.



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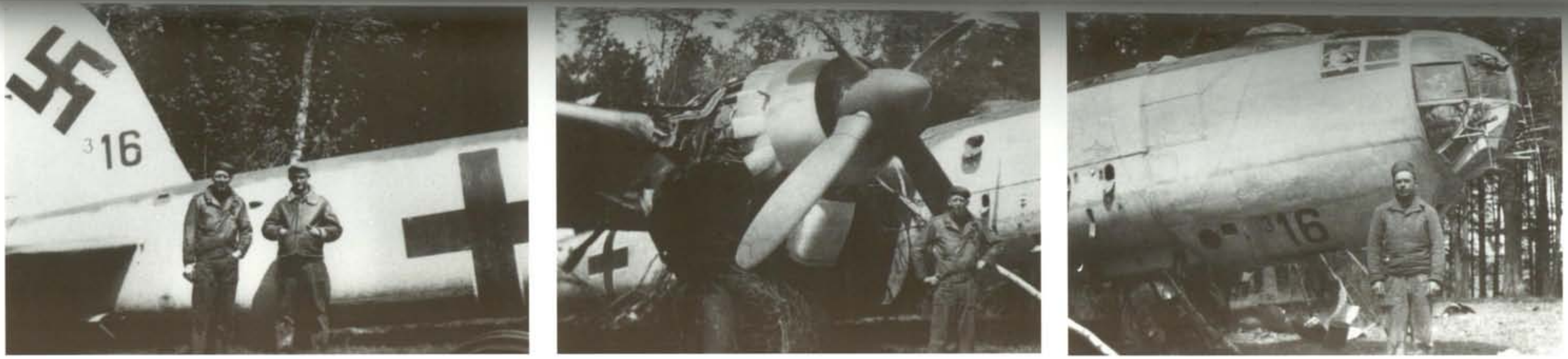
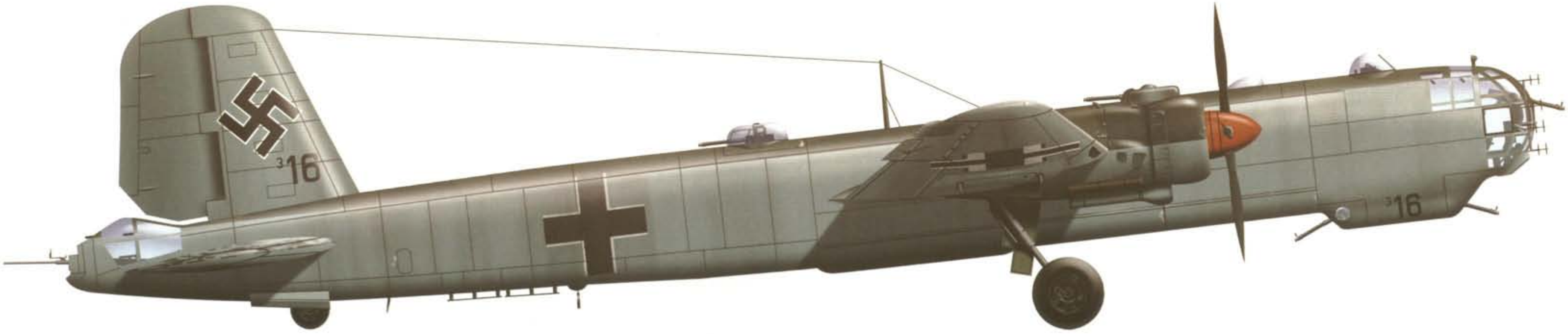
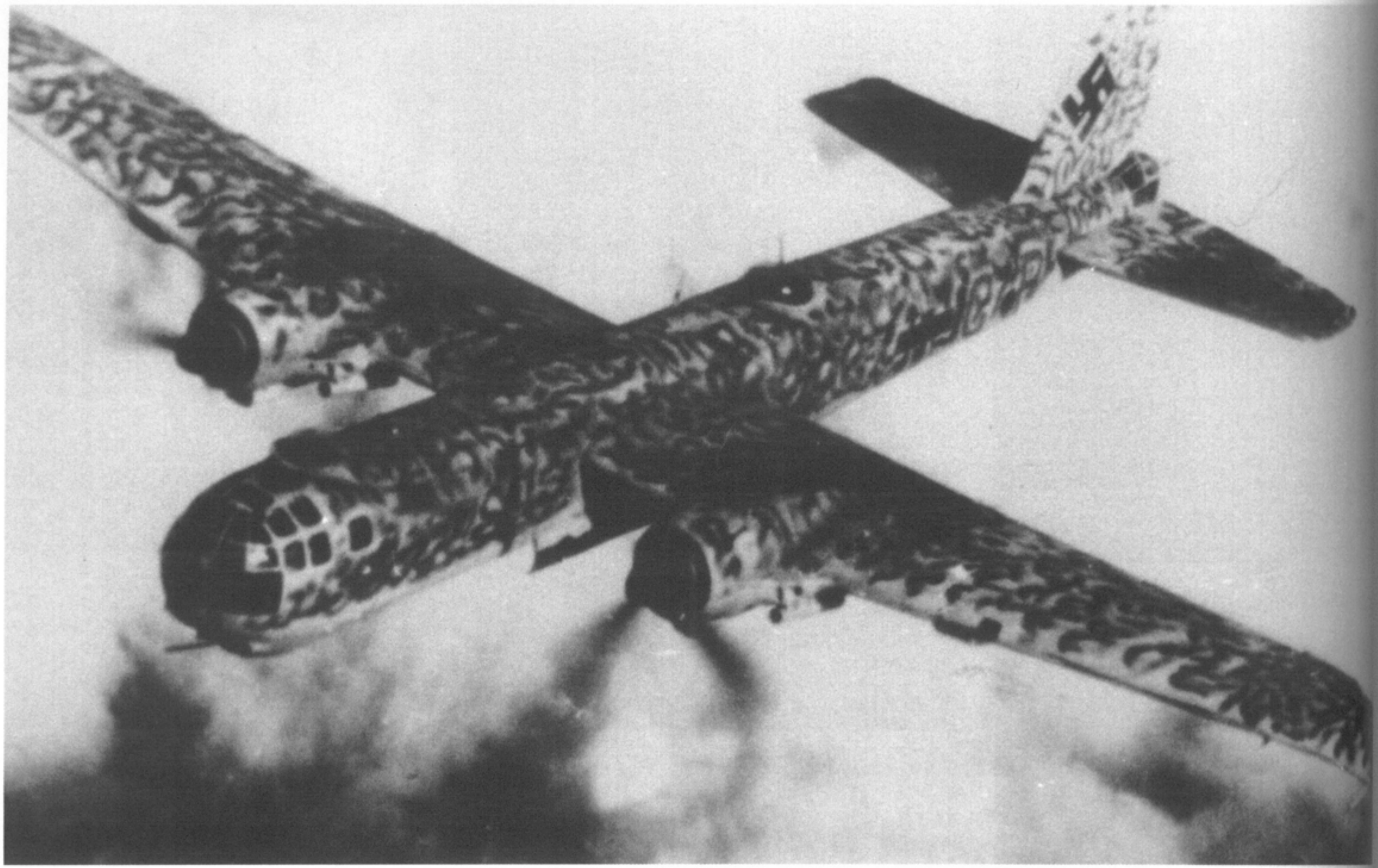


ABOVE: An Arado-built He 177 A-5 W.Nr. 550316 is seen here in an abandoned state after being found by US troops. Note how the last three digits of the Werknummer '316' are repeated on the tail fin and forward ventral gondola. The Heinkel also carries FuG 200 Hohentwiel ship search radar.

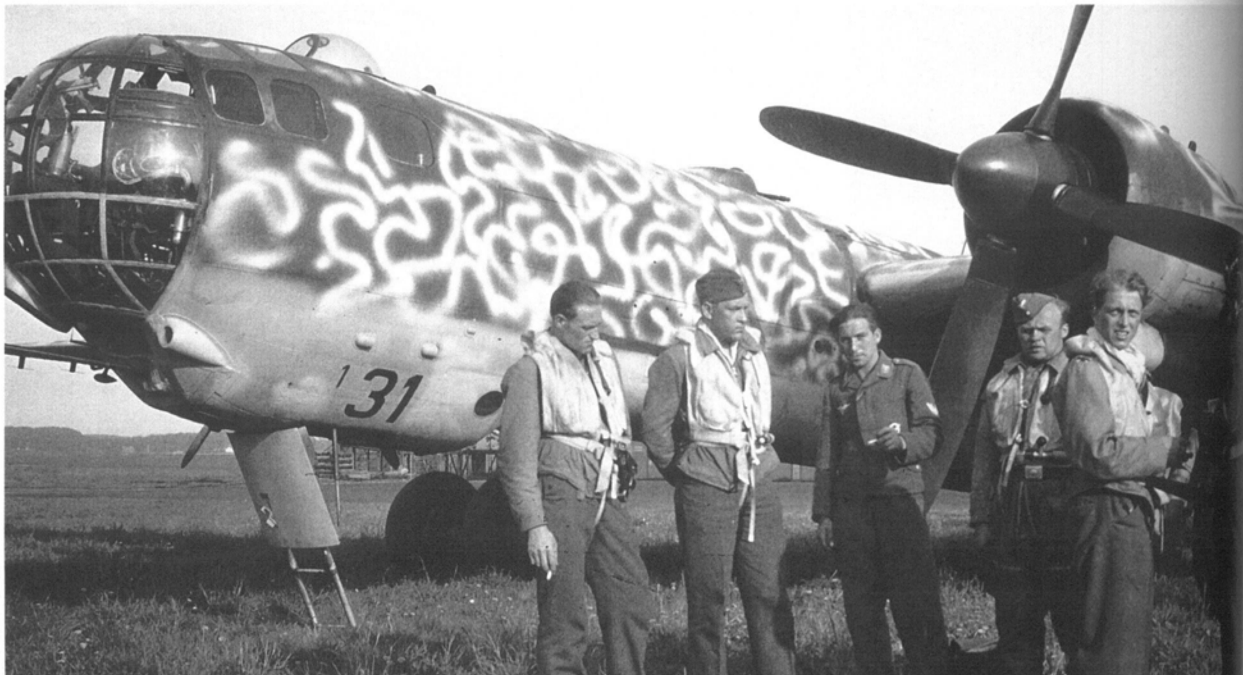


Heinkel He 177 A-5 of an unknown unit, possibly KG 100

This aircraft has been painted in a half-factory colour scheme of RLM 70/71 on the uppersurfaces with RLM 65 underneath. However the standard application mottle of RLM 71/02 to the fuselage sides has been omitted. Another unusual feature is that the aircraft does not feature any factory or unit codes. It may be that this operation was in the process of being applied but never completed. The installation of the FuG 200 ship search radar would indicate that the aircraft could have been destined for KG 40. The only identification features are the black numbers on the tail and nose which from the last three digits of the Werknummer 316, falls into the Arado-built 550 prefix number series. From analysis of the photographs and shade of the spinner it is believed that it may have been painted red.



ABOVE: An He 177 A-5 believed to be from 6./KG 100 and sporting a most unusual camouflage finish. It appears that the whole aircraft was painted in RLM 65 and then completely sprayed in meandering wavy lines of RLM 70/71 in an 'Arabesken' fashion. Although the unit code '6N' is not visible at this time, it might only have been applied at one-sixth normal letter height, as this was often too small to be seen on photographs. The two letters after the Balkenkreuz are 'C' and 'D' but are positioned further apart than normal and both appear to be painted black.



ABOVE: A Heinkel He 177 A-3 of 5./KG 100. The aircraft carries the standard camouflage pattern of RLM 70/71 and RLM 65 with a mottle RLM 71/02 on the fuselage sides. The uppersurfaces have been heavily oversprayed in a random scribble pattern of RLM 76. It was found this kind of camouflage was particularly effective when flying over water. Note the last three digits of the Werknummer '131' on the sides the ventral gondola.

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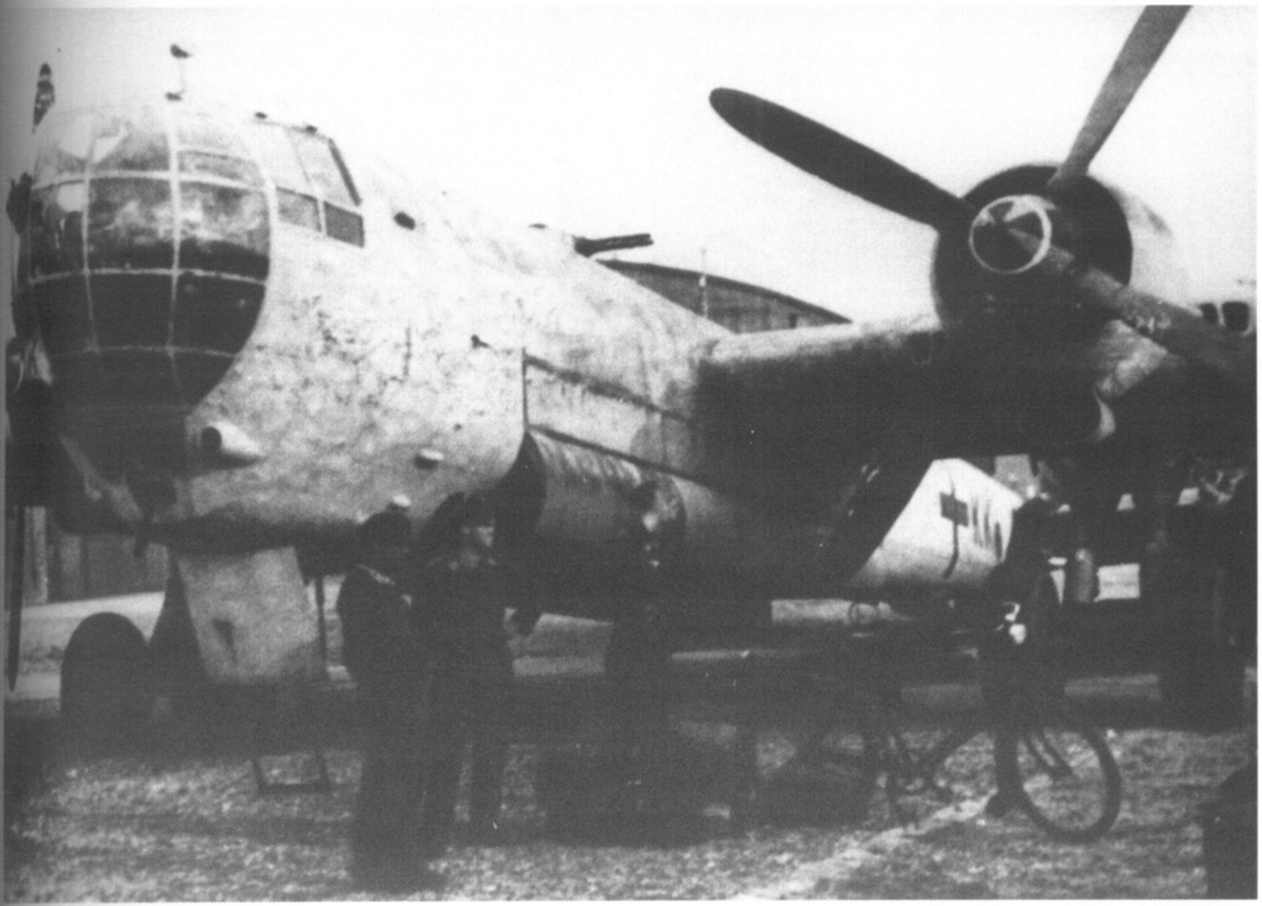
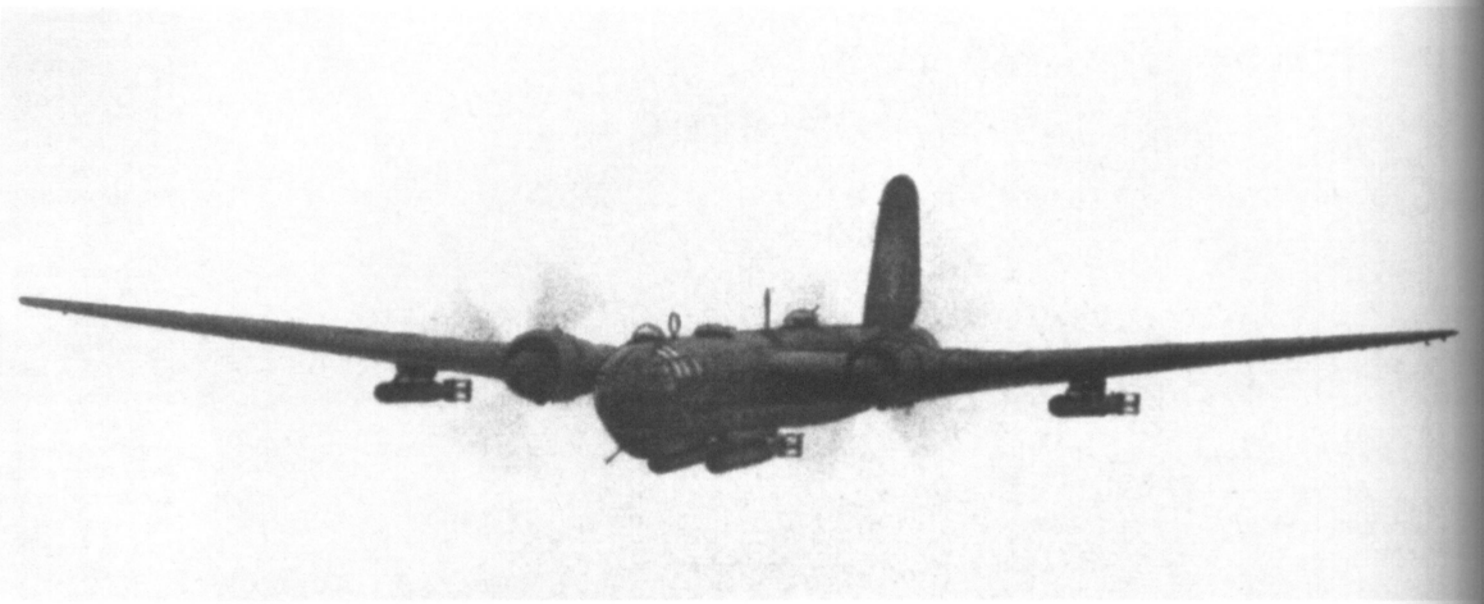
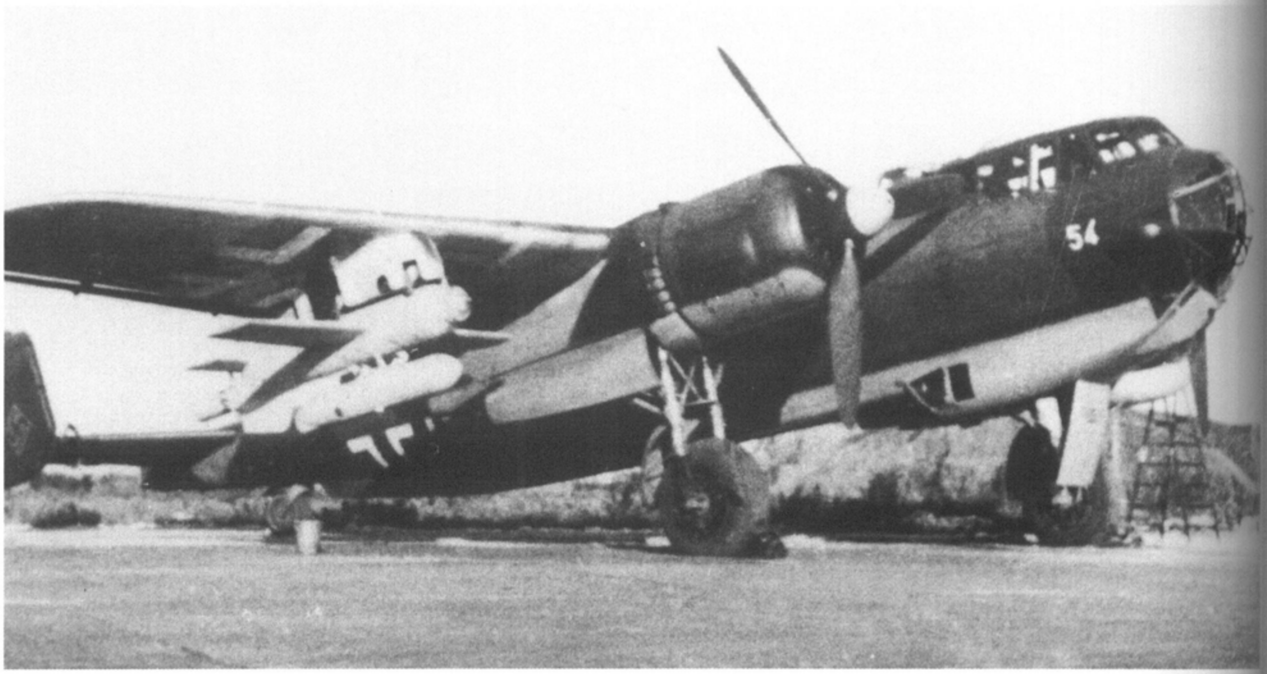


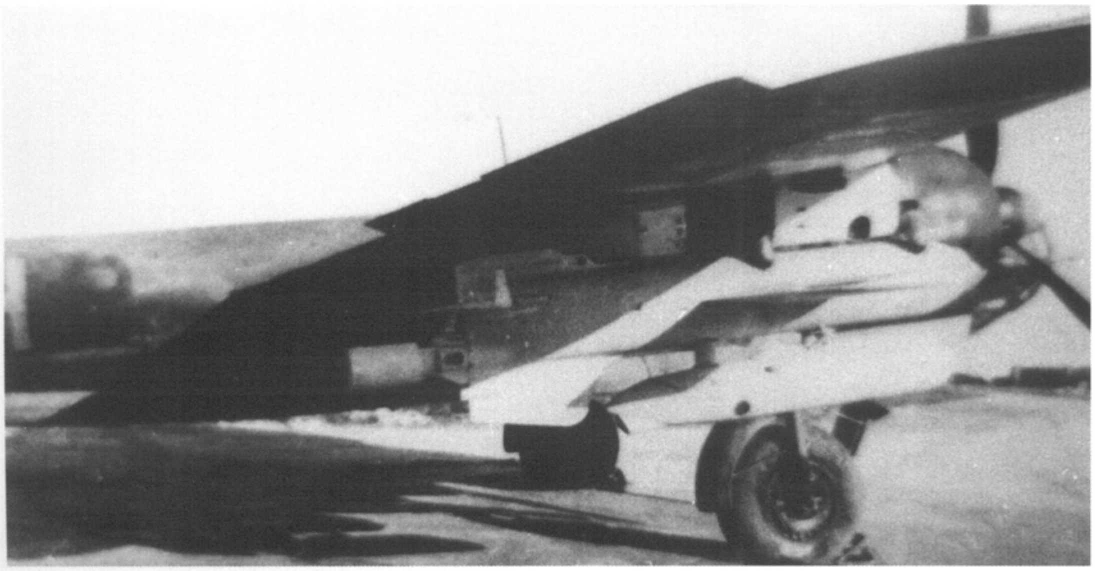
LEFT: The pilot, Lt Goetze, and crew of this He 177 A-3 from 2./KG 100 have just arrived with their gear in front of their aircraft, ready for another mission. The interesting feature of this aircraft is the way the spinners have been painted. They have been segmented into equal parts of four red and four green sections with a thin white band a third of the way from the front. The colour red could indicate 2. Staffel, with the white band representing the Gruppe colour.

BELOW: In-flight view of a He 177 pilot.



ABOVE: A Heinkel He 177 A-3/R7 from the E-Stelle Gotenhafen test centre trials the installation and use of torpedoes for proposed torpedo-bomber operations. The torpedoes used in the trials were the Italian L5 type and, owing to the fact that they would not fit in the bomb bay, were fitted beneath the fuselage and subsequently beneath the wings.





LEFT AND ABOVE: A Dornier 217 E-5 of 6./KG 100 loaded with two Henschel Hs 293 glide bombs on ETC 2000 ordnance racks. The duct near the rear of the pylon carried hot air from the parent aircraft's de-icing system to the weapon's guidance and control systems, to prevent these from freezing up during flight. After launch, the rocket motor under the bomb boosted the speed to around 600 km/h. Then, its fuel exhausted, the missile glided the rest of the way to the target guided by radio control.

ABOVE: Pictured left to right are Oblt Arthur Schröder, Oblt Hermann Horstmann (killed 12 December 1943) and Oblt Dieter Meister (killed 21 November 1944) of 13./KG 40. The Ju 88 R was essentially a C-6 that had its Jumo engines replaced by two BMW 801 MA radial engines. It was a type that possessed excellent handling qualities.

The scene of battle was again shifting back to the Mediterranean. On 3 September 1943, Italy surrendered and on 8 September 1943, the Italian fleet set sail for Malta to surrender. The following day, III./KG 100 carried out its devastating attack on the *Roma* and *Italia* to the west of the Straits of Bonifacio whilst at the same time, an Allied landing was taking place at Salerno. The landing presented ideal targets for the *Luftwaffe's* new types of bombs. On 11 September the American cruiser *Savannah* was hit by a glider bomb, killing 197 crew; the same day the cruiser *Philadelphia* was also damaged. Two days later, the British cruiser *Uganda* and the destroyers *Loyal* and *Nubian* were similarly damaged whilst, unfortunately, the hospital ship *Newfoundland* was sunk. 14 September saw claims for two freighters sunk and on 16 September, III./KG 100 badly damaged the British battleships *Warspite* and *Valiant*. However, for the next month the pace of battle eased off.

On 4 October 1943, convoy UGS 18 was attacked off the North African coast by both II./KG 100 and KG 26, sinking a freighter and damaging two more. The next major attack was not until 21 October 1943 when 13 Dornier 217s from II./KG 100, 28 Heinkel 111s of I./KG 26 and eight Junkers 88s from, III./KG 26 attacked convoy MKS 28 off Cape Tenes with 12 Hs 293s and 54 torpedoes. The *Luftwaffe* claimed to have sunk or damaged 15 freighters, a tanker and a destroyer with hits by two Hs 297s and 15 torpedoes. However, only the freighter *Saltwick* and steamer *Tivives* were sunk, the *Saltwick* being credited to *Fw* Bruno Obst of 6./KG 100. Losses were heavy; four Heinkel 111s of I./KG 26, including the *Staffel Kapitän* of 3./KG 26, *Hptm* Walter Hildebrand who, with his Observer *Lt* Helmut Renz, had been awarded the *Deutsches Kreuz in Gold* just four days previously. A further three aircraft from I. *Gruppe* were damaged whilst III. *Gruppe* lost a Junkers 88 whose crew had been forced to bale out just five months before, as *Uffz* Anton Temmen of 8./KG 26 recalls:

> *"We took off from Montpellier towards North Africa. At dusk, we attacked from the east flying on a westerly course. We aimed our two torpedoes at a large ship without being able to watch a hit because of the terrible* Flak. *Our aircraft received a few hits during the course of this lowest level attack and then there were problems with the starboard engine. We had just been able to climb to a height of about 200 metres when this engine stopped.*
>
> *"To reach Montpellier at night on one engine was hopeless so we set a westerly course to be able to ditch near the Spanish coast. Because Ibiza was brightly illuminated, it came into sight after some time and so we decided to bale out over the Island. We all reached the ground without a scratch, fortunately our plane crashed in an uninhabited area and nobody came to harm* [2]*."*

Autumn 1943 would be an anti-climax on all fronts for the anti-shipping aircraft. The most successful attack occurred on 6 November 1943 when convoy KMF 25A was attacked by 35 aircraft from I and III./KG 26 and KG 100 between Sardinia and Algeria, resulting in the sinking of the American destroyer *Beatty*, the troopships *Santa Elena* and the *Marnix van St Aldegonde*. Again, losses were three aircraft from I./KG 26 and three from III. *Gruppe* which included the experienced *Staffel Kapitän* of 8. *Staffel* and former *Staffel Kapitän* of 1./906, *Hptm* Eberhard Peukert.

Of note was the long-awaited appearance in the anti-shipping role of the Hs 293 equipped He 177 with the arrival of *Maj* Rudolf Mons from II./KG 40. Its first attack was against convoy

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[2] Temmen and his crew Lt. Fritz Massloh, Uffz Gottlob Hartmaier and Lt. Eberhard Eggert were quickly repatriated and continued to fly on operations until the end of the war, never again having to bale out.

ABOVE:
Oblt Hermann Horstmann was a highly successful pilot within V./KG 40, and later I./ZG 1. He joined from a reconnaissance unit in January 1943 and was given command of 13./KG 40 at the end of March 1943. By the time of his death on 12 December 1943, when he was shot down by Beaufighters of 143 Squadron, he had become one of the unit's Experten and had been awarded the Deutsches Kreuz in Gold on 16 August 1943.

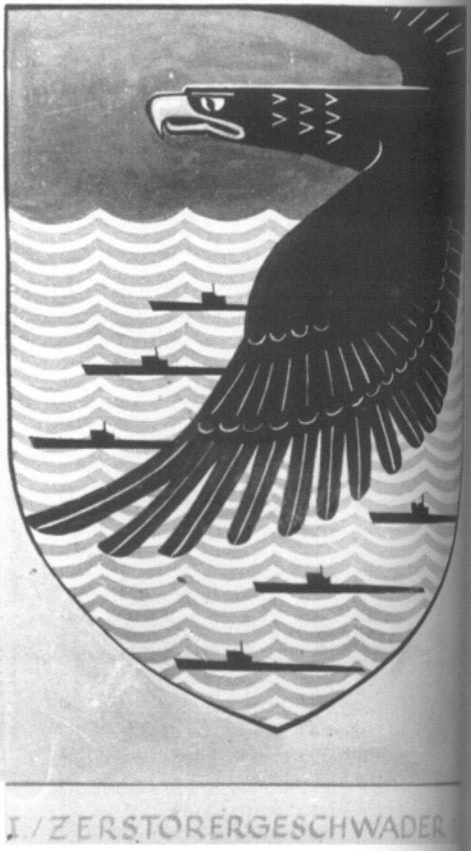
SL 139/MKS 230 in the Atlantic on 21 November 1943, witnessed by Lt John Huckle on HMS *Calder:*

"I can only recall one aircraft which launched its bomb at us and then went after the Drury*. 'Our' bomb landed fairly close but failed to explode. At that point, we were making violent evasive turns and the rudder jammed at hard a starboard, resulting in our going around in ever-decreasing circles for a few minutes...I failed to see the second aircraft which then committed a tactical error (from the German viewpoint).* Calder's *dodging and weaving to avoid the first bomb had taken us away from the other five ships which had, meanwhile, closed up in order to concentrate their AA fire. Maybe the large splash alongside us, followed by our frantic circling out of control, satisfied the enemy that we were finished and well we might have been had that second aircraft used its bombs against us whilst we were unsupported..."*

The attack failed, costing the lives of *Oblt* Herbert Von Berg and his crew from 5./KG 40*; Ofw* Gerhard Freyer and his crew from 4. *Staffel* were also killed in a crash on their return to France, whilst a third 4. *Staffel* aircraft crashed on landing with no injuries to its crew.

If the first anti-shipping mission for the Heinkel 177 was a failure, the attack on 26 November 1943 was a disaster. 18 Heinkel 111s of I./KG 26, 15 Junkers 88s from III./KG 26 and 20 Heinkel 177s from II./KG 40 took off in the afternoon to attack convoy KMF 26 north of Djidelli. Each *Gruppe* claimed all sorts of successes despite the fighter and *Flak* defences, claiming to have sunk three freighters and two destroyers and damaging two freighters and two destroyers; the only recorded sinking was the troopship *Rohna.* Losses were heavy; two Heinkel 111s from I./KG 26, a Junkers 88 from III./KG 26 missing and another force-landed in Spain. Losses for II./KG 40 were more serious, six aircraft missing and three crash-landing on their return. Losses included the *Gruppen Kommandeur Maj* Rudolf Mons, *Hptm* Egon Schmidt, *Staffel Kapitän* of 4./KG *40, Hptm* Arthur Horn of 4. *Staffel* and *Hptm* Alfred Nuss of 6. *Staffel*, all experienced pilots. With just seven Heinkel 177s serviceable, the *Gruppe* did not make a reappearance for another month, by which time *Maj* Walter Rieder, formerly of 8./KG 40, had been given command of the *Gruppen.*

As 1943 came to a close, yet again it was the weather that limited operations. II./KG 40 would lose just two more aircraft in action, the Heinkel 177s of *Lt* Richard Kranz from 4. *Staffel* to Beaufighters of 143 Squadron on 24 December and *Hptm* Bernhard Eidhoff of 5. *Staffel* to a Mosquito of 157 Squadron on 28 December 1943. The Focke-Wulf 200s of III./KG 40, now equipped with the Hs 293, would lose *Oblt* Joachim Knauthe of 8. *Staffel* to Grumman Wildcats of 842 Squadron on 1 December; *Oblt* Egon Scherreth and his crew from 7. *Staffel* would be interned in Eire following their force-landing after being damaged by *Flak* from convoy ON 214 on 13 December whilst *Hptm* Wilhelm Dette, *Staffel kapitän of* 9./KG 40 would ditch his Condor on 28 December 1943 due to engine failure and all but one of his crew would be captured. The last lost was *Hptm* Georg Schabert of 7./KG 40 whose Condor simply disappeared on 29 December 1943. It was not a good end to the year for I./ZG 1, the re-designated V./KG 40 which would lose seven crews, including *Oblt* Hermann Horstmann *Staffel Kapitän* of 1./ZG 1 to ever increasing Allied fighter patrols over the Bay of Biscay. Meanwhile, to the east, the anti-shipping units in the Mediterranean remained largely inactive until the second week of January 1944 and massed attacks did not reoccur until March 1944. 1943 had begun badly and had ended badly; the future for the *Luftwaffe's* anti-shipping units for the remainder of the war would only get much worse.



ABOVE:
The unofficial badge of 1./ZG has never been seen on any of Ju 88s.

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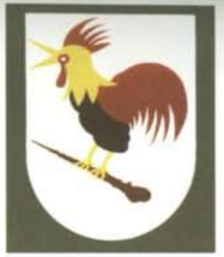
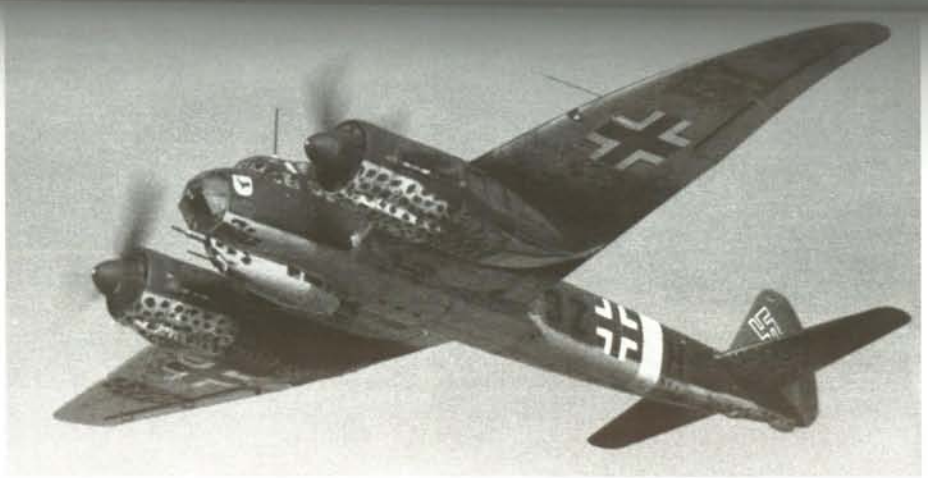
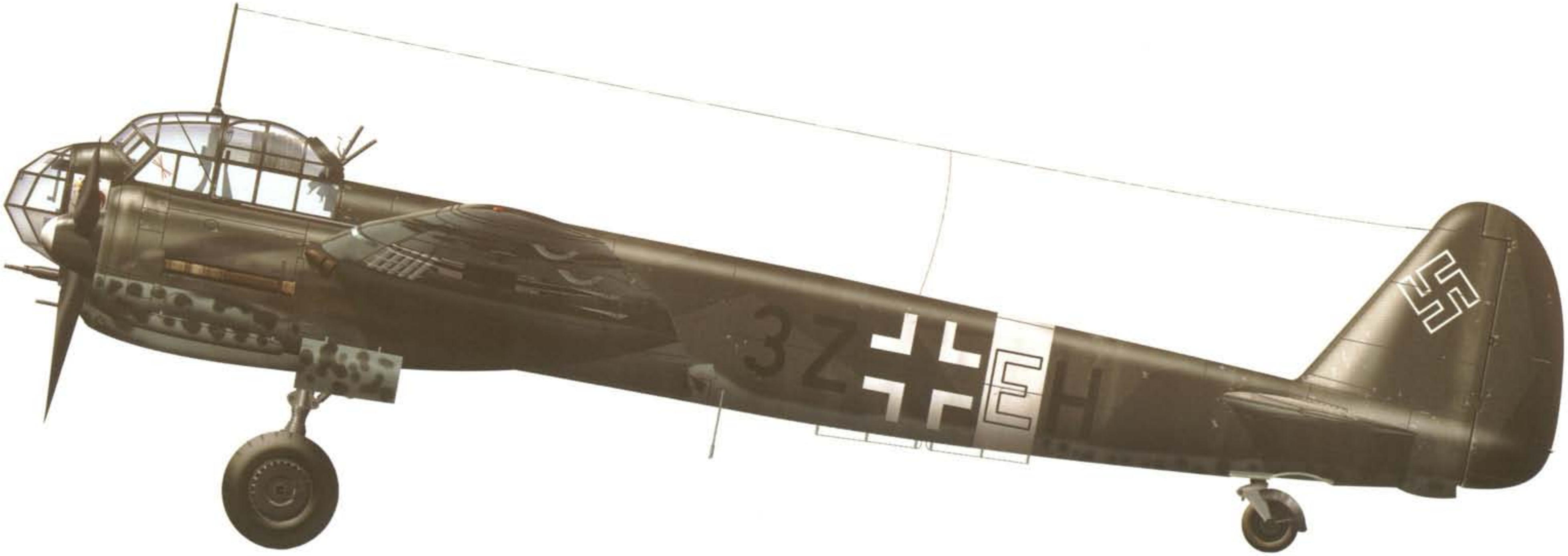


Emblem of I./KG 77

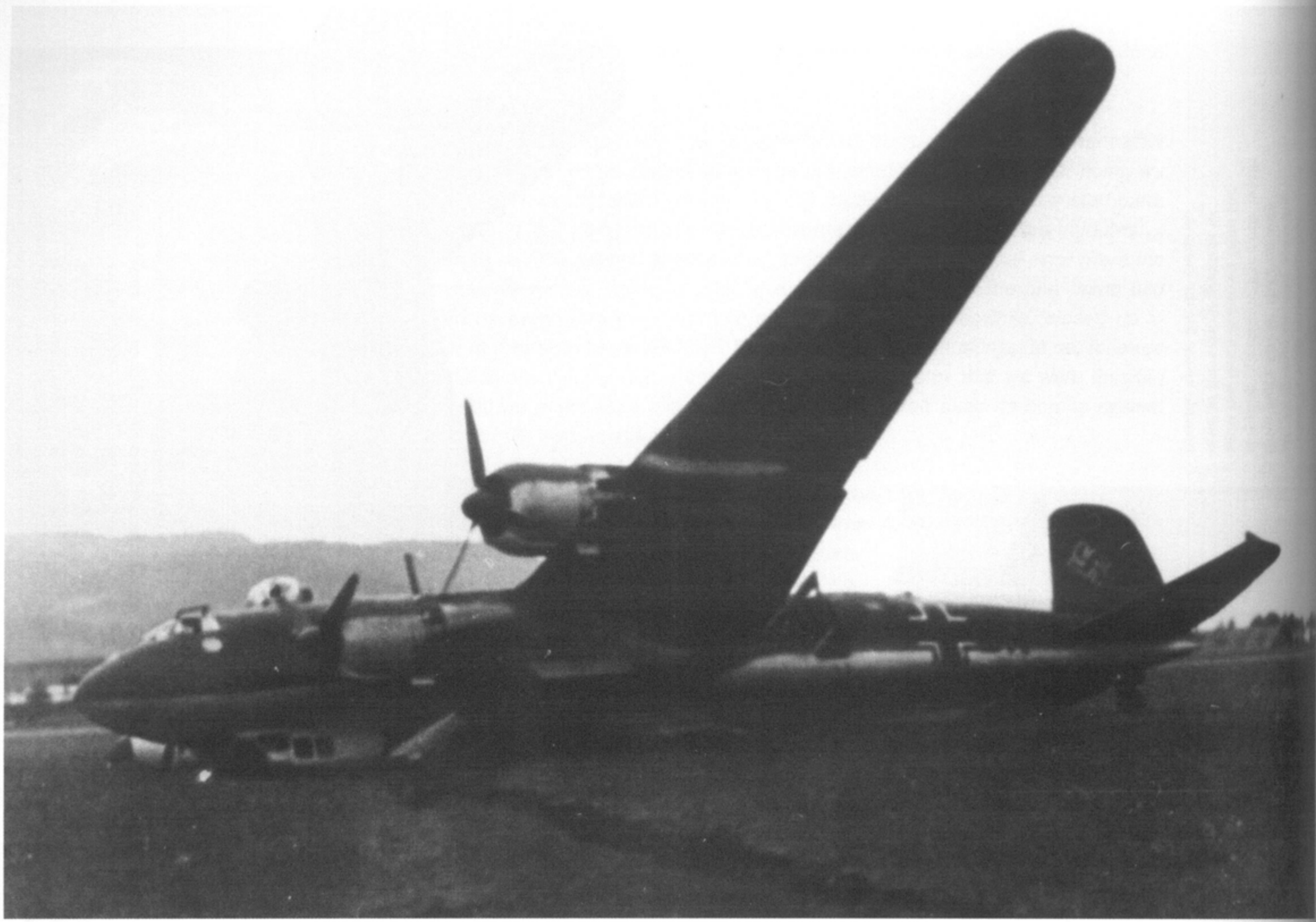


LEFT: A Ju 88 A-14 coded 3Z+EH of I./KG 77 with nose-mounted MG FF 20 mm cannon operating from Sicily late in 1942 on anti-shipping operations. The Lotfe bombsight has been removed from the nose of the ventral gondola to provide space for the cannon.

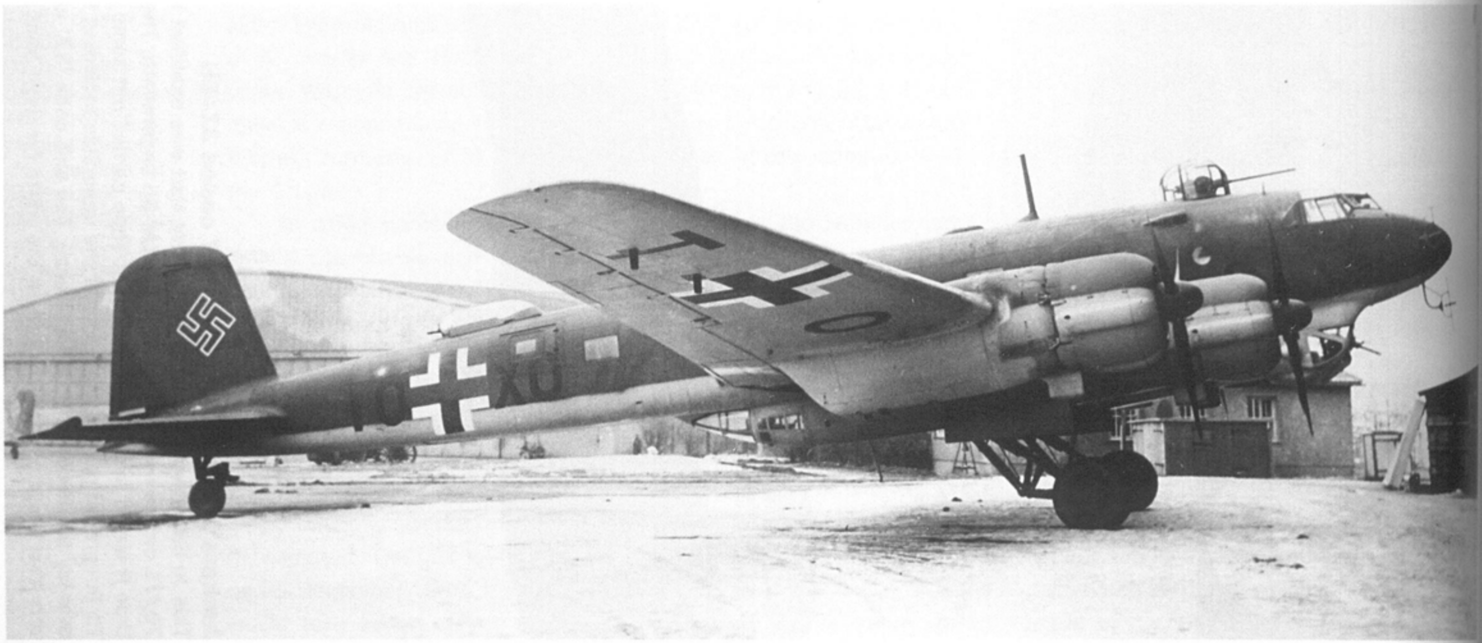


Junkers Ju 88 A-14 of 1./KG 77 coded 3Z+EH

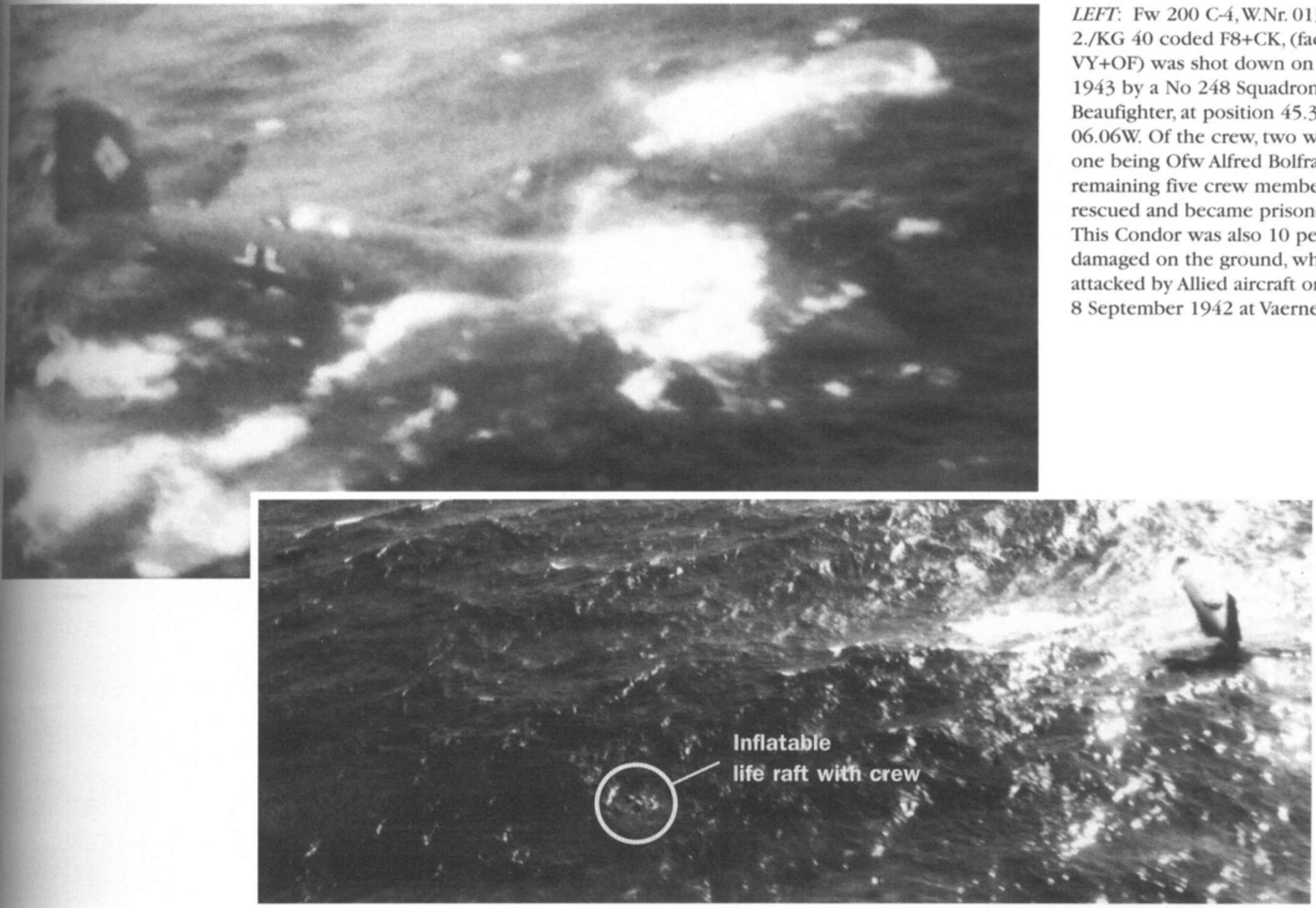
This Ju 88 was probably an A-4 variant that was modified into an A-14 in a maintenance workshop. It retained the splinter pattern of RLM 70/71 on the uppersurfaces with RLM 65 underneath. The outboard bomb racks have been removed and the surface faired over. At that time it would appear that the paint shop carried out some non-standard modifications to the paint scheme by applying either RLM 70 or 71 in sprayed patches to parts of the underside including the tail area. Still noticeable are the dive brakes under the wings which partly over-lay the underwing Balkenkreuze. The unit code '3Z' and Staffel letter 'H' are in black and the individual letter 'E' is just visible as a very thin black outline painted on the white fuselage band. The emblem of I./KG 77 has been painted on the nose.



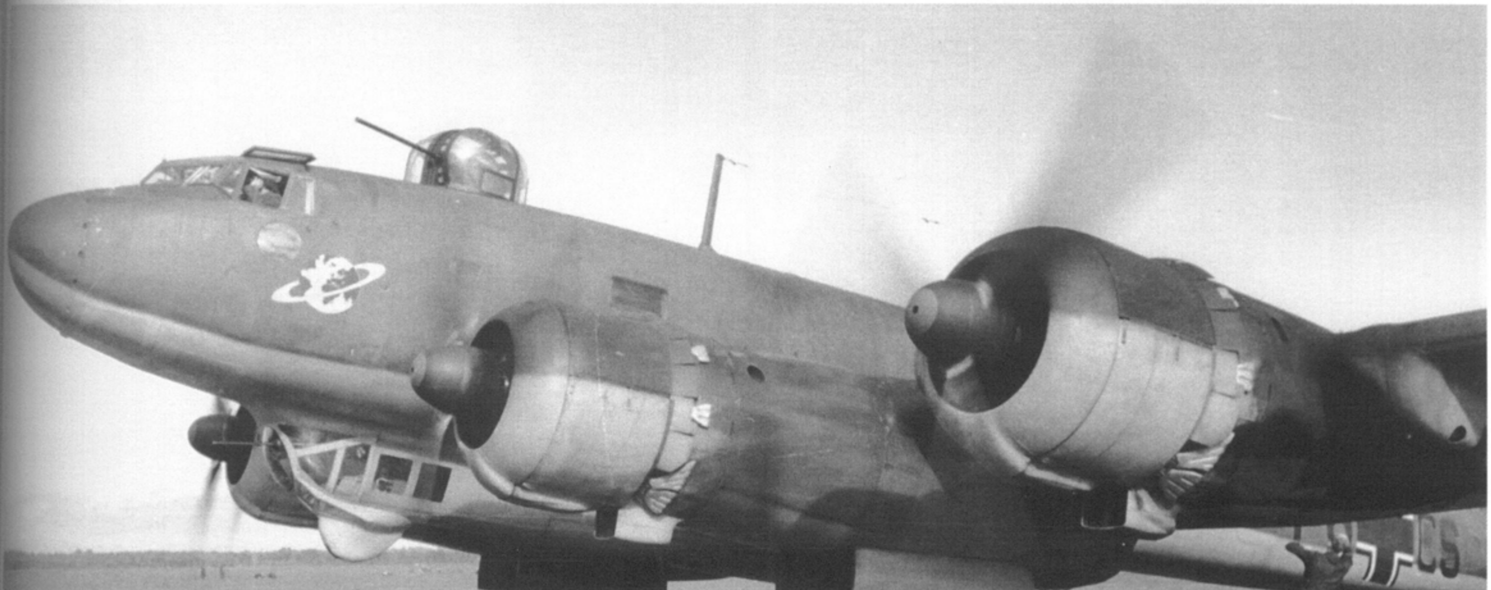
ABOVE: Fw 200 C-4, W.Nr. 0111, coded F8+BK of 2./KG 40 after a severe ground loop at Vaernes, Norway, 23 August 1942.



ABOVE: Fw 200 C-8/U10, W.Nr. 0259, factory coded TO+XO. The C-8 was the last production model and was intended specifically for the launching of Hs 293A missiles. Notable features of this aircraft are the deepened outboard engine nacelles (for carrying Hs 293s) and a forwarded, extended ventral gondola. Note the FuG 200 Hohentwiel ship search radar.

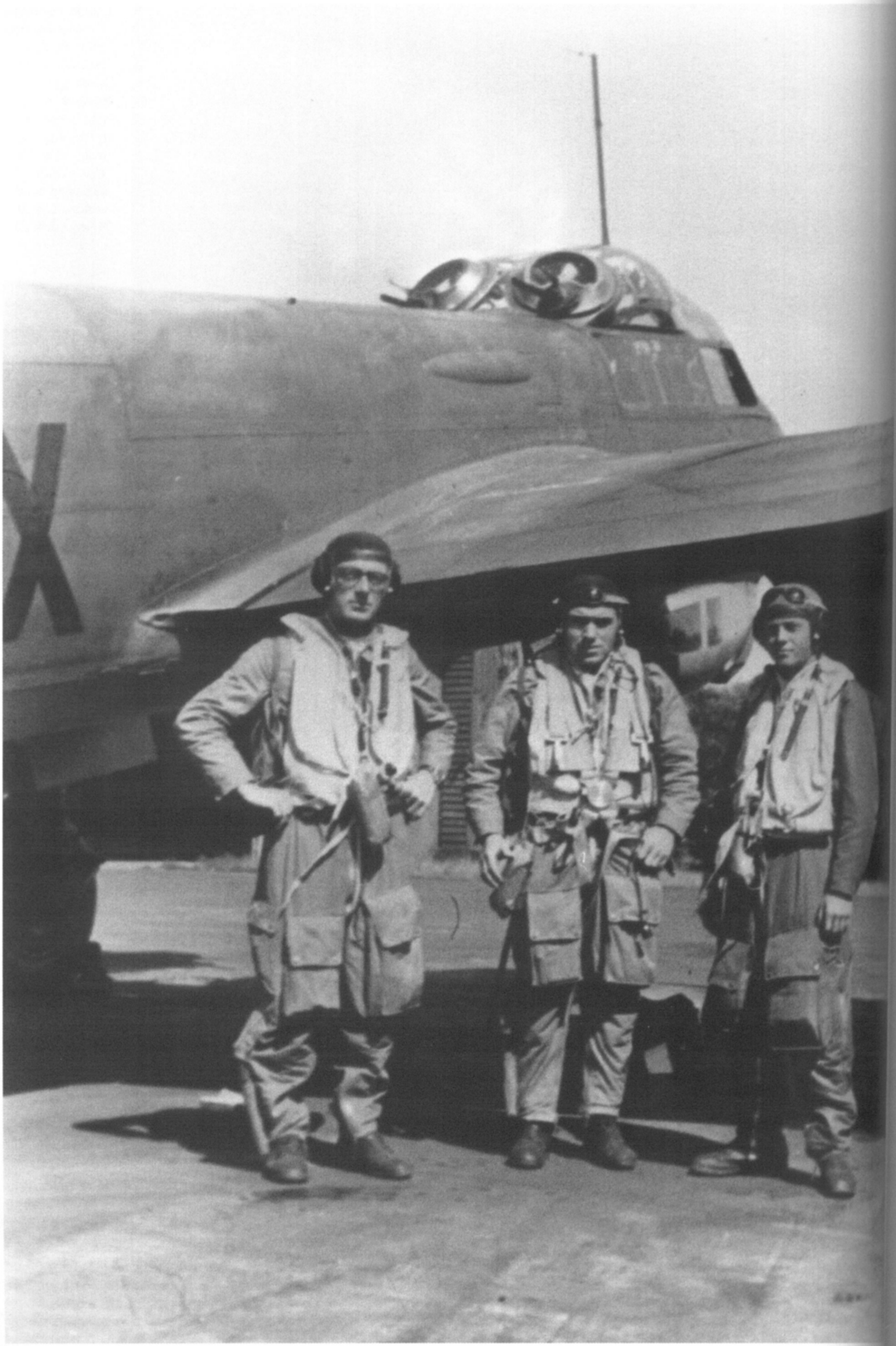


LEFT: Fw 200 C-4, W.Nr. 0132, of 2./KG 40 coded F8+CK, (factory code VY+OF) was shot down on 29 July 1943 by a No 248 Squadron Beaufighter, at position 45.30N by 06.06W. Of the crew, two were killed, one being Ofw Alfred Bolfrass. The remaining five crew members were rescued and became prisoners of war. This Condor was also 10 per cent damaged on the ground, when it was attacked by Allied aircraft on 8 September 1942 at Vaernes.



ABOVE: An Fw 200 C-4 of KG 40 with all four BMW Bramo radial engines running 'sits' on its wheel chocks, possibly on an engine test by ground crew - note the open cockpit roof hatch. Apart from the HDL 151 (cannon armed) upper turret, either a 13 mm MG 131 or a 20 mm MG 151 was mounted in the nose of the ventral gondola, depending upon whether the Lofte 7D bomb sight was carried. Due in this instance to the bombsight being installed, a MG 131 is carried. All other defensive positions mounted 7.9 mm machine guns.

RIGHT: The steady attrition of crews of 13./KG 40 in action is shown in this photograph. On 12 December 1943, two out of the three shown here would be killed in action. Gefr Werner Göbler (killed), Uffz Rolf Johenneken and Uffz Hans Frank (killed).



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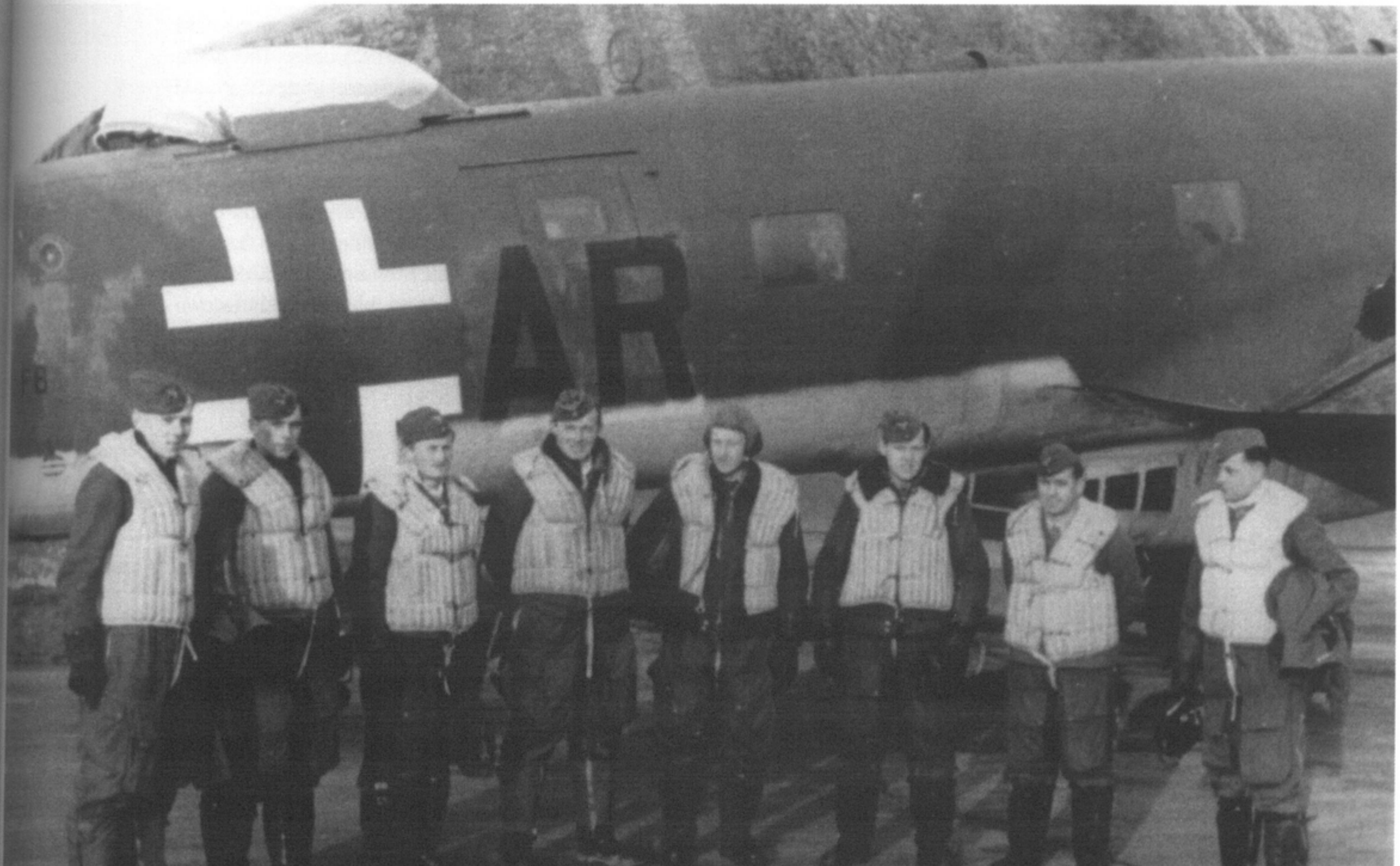
LEFT: Wherever German maritime aircraft were, they were in danger. Here a Ju 52/3m MS (mine search) W.Nr. 3400 of 1./Minensuchgruppe 1 is caught by Typhoons of 266 Squadron off Ile de Croiz, 30 December 1943. Uffz Johann Stampfer and his crew were all killed.

BELOW: Fw 200 C-8 Condor W.Nr. 0248, coded F8+AR of 7./KG 40. This aircraft would be lost on 5 March 1944 when it was shot down by aircraft of the US 4th and 357th Fighter Groups near St Jean D'Angeley whilst Hptm Georg Schabert (4th from left) and his crew were lost over the Atlantic on 29 December 1943 in another aircraft.

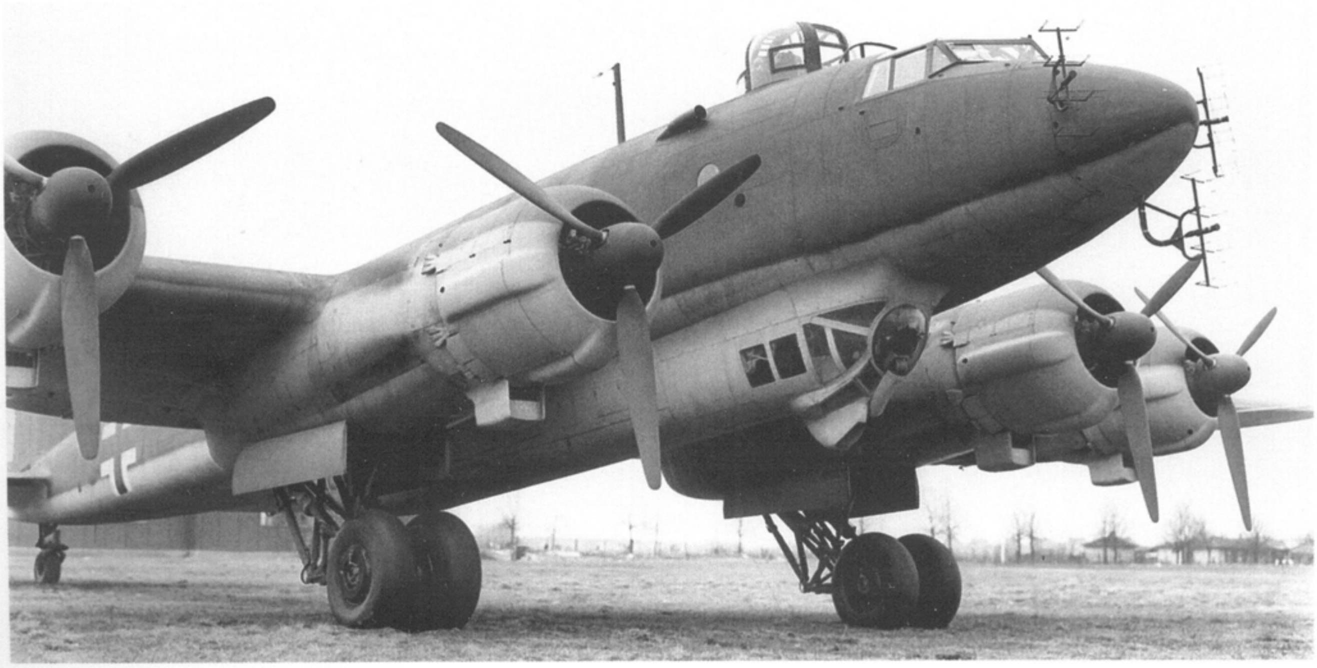


Nowhere left to run – 1944 - 1945

The air attack against Bordeaux on 5 January 1944 was a portent of things to come with in the region of eight Condors being destroyed and another three badly damaged; numerous other aircraft were also destroyed or damaged. This was a particular concern as it followed a similar attack on Cognac on New Year's Eve. However, although the single-seat fighters from *Jagdgeschwader* 2 intercepted, at least one crew from 3./ZG 1 also intercepted, as *Uffz* Hans-Georg Ernst relates:

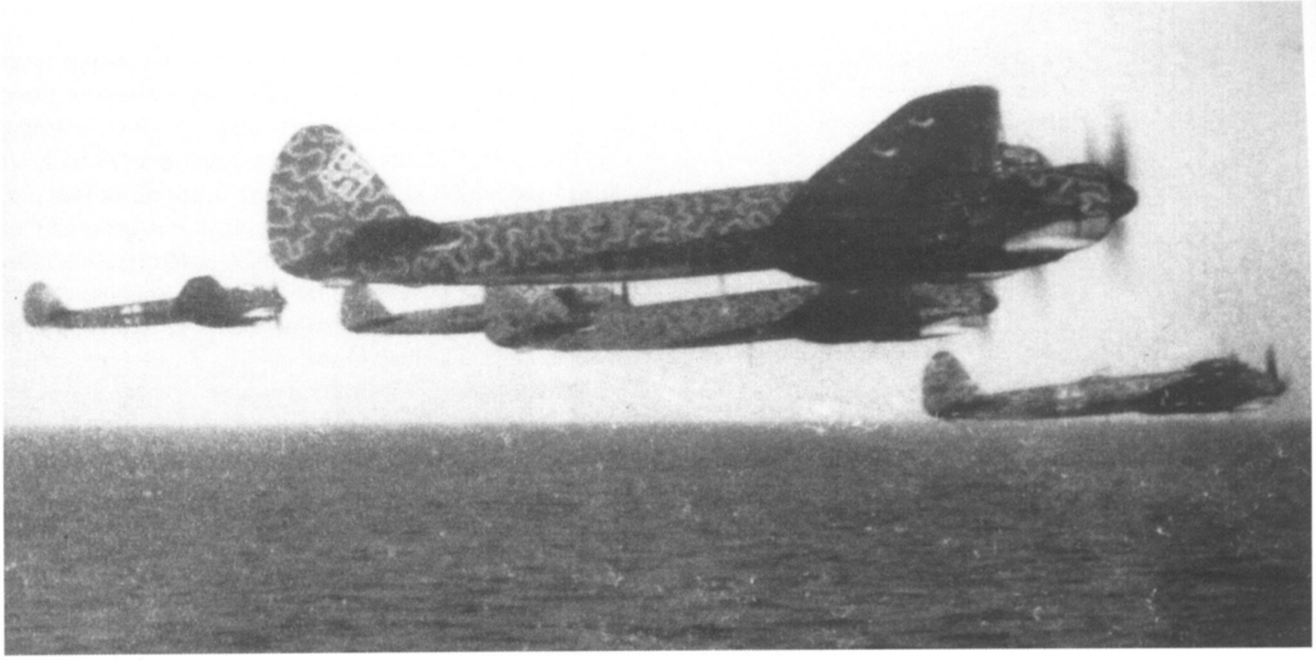
> *"While we were taking off from Bordeaux, the first bombs were hitting the ground a short distance away. We climbed at once and saw the enemy bombers were attacking in three waves. One of the lead B-17s had been hit by Flak and was showing a white smoke trail and was flying behind its unit. We wanted to attack this plane but in the meantime, several of our single-engined fighters attacked and the bomber went down in a steep spin, two crew members baling out. We thought that it would crash without further attacks and in fact this bomber crashed into the Bay of Arcarchon at 1058 hrs, burning on impact.*
>
> *"After that, we climbed again and chased the bombers. They were flying 20-30 kms west of Bordeaux over the Bay of Biscay and were turning onto a northerly course. One of the planes left the unit to the east, presumably to give protection to some of the other bombers lagging behind. The B-17 was hit and black smoke came out of the left wing, possibly the inner engine. While attacking, we saw some of our fighters which also tried to attack so we fired the recognition signals of the day. We pressed home a further six attacks from the right and behind and we could see effective hits in the fuselage and wings; the enemy plane was losing height constantly. The American pilot was very experienced and was able to bring the plane under control and ditched the B-17 at 1107 hours in the middle of the eastern edge of the Lac d'Hourtin Carcans. The plane finally settled on the beach and four or five crews were seen on the fuselage and wings"*

Even when they were not being bombed, anti-shipping units in France were not safe. On 19 December 1943, the newly operational I./KG 40, commanded by *Maj* Karl Henkelmann, arrived at Chateaudun in France with its Heinkel 177s and, co-located with I./KG 100, was assigned to IX. *Fliegerkorps* to fly conventional missions against mainland Britain as part of Operation *Steinbock.* Unlucky to be flying at the same time that the B-17s were attacking Bordeaux on 5 January, *Lt* Rolf Staemmler and his crew from 2. *Staffel* were unlucky to be the first casualties of the new *Gruppe* when they were shot down



LEFT: A factory fresh Fw 200 C-4 Condor showing clear detail of many aspects of its structure and design. Note the installation of the FuG 200 Hohentwiel ship search radar, the Lotfe 7D bombsight and associated ventral glazing. The scoop on the upper fuselage is a cabin air inlet.

RIGHT: 9./KG 26 in action over the Mediterranean, early in 1944.



on a training flight by the 352nd Fighter Group. The Condors would lose two aircraft in similar circumstances, *Ofw* Willi Schmidt and his crew from 9. *Staffel* to a Mosquito of 418 Squadron near Avord on 27 January and the Condor flown by *Fw* Karl Miklas of 12. *Staffel* to Typhoons of 247 Squadron near Chateaudun on 29 January.

Meanwhile, the anti-shipping war in the Mediterranean remained quiet for the first three weeks of January 1944 as noted in an Allied Intelligence report:

> *"It is still not clear whether the inactivity of the specialist anti-shipping units throughout December was due to a temporary withdrawal from their bases in southern France. On 10 January, Heinkel 111s of I./KG 26 and Junkers 88s from III./KG 26 carried out a torpedo attack on an Allied convoy north-east of Oran but on this occasion, there was no evidence to suggest the participation of Do 217s of II./KG 100 which had been prominent in the November operations..."*

ABOVE: Ju 88 C-6s of 2./ZG 1 returning to base at Bordeaux.

The attack, which was against convoy KMS 37N resulted in the sinking of two freighters; six attacking aircraft were claimed but it would appear that just two aircraft were lost from each *Gruppe.*

However, of greater concern to the *Luftwaffe* were the Allied landings at Anzio and Nettuno on the night of 22 January 1944. The hurried transfer of German bomber units to bases in northern Italy and southern France reflected the Germans' apprehension that the landing would succeed in its aim of diverting forces from the Monte Cassino area, thus relieving pressure on the Allied ground forces fighting there. The first units to arrive were I. and III./LG 1 which arrived at Aviano on 23 January and were quickly in action bombing the beachhead. I. and II./KG 30, which until December 1943 had been operating over the Mediterranean primarily against harbours and moored shipping, had taken part in their first *Steinbock* attack on 21 January operating from St. Trond and Eindhoven (I *Gruppe*) and Varel (II. *Gruppe*). Both *Gruppen* were moved back to Istres in France and then Bergamo in Italy. The torpedo units I and III./KG 26 were quickly thrown into battle. III. *Gruppe* suffered particularly badly on 23 January and amongst the losses was the *Staffel Kapitän* of 9 *Staffel, Hptm* Josef Wissborn. Also in action were *Stab* and II./KG 100 whose Hs 293 on the evening of 23 January sunk the destroyer *Janus,* which exploded with heavy loss of life, and badly damaged the destroyer *Jervis.*

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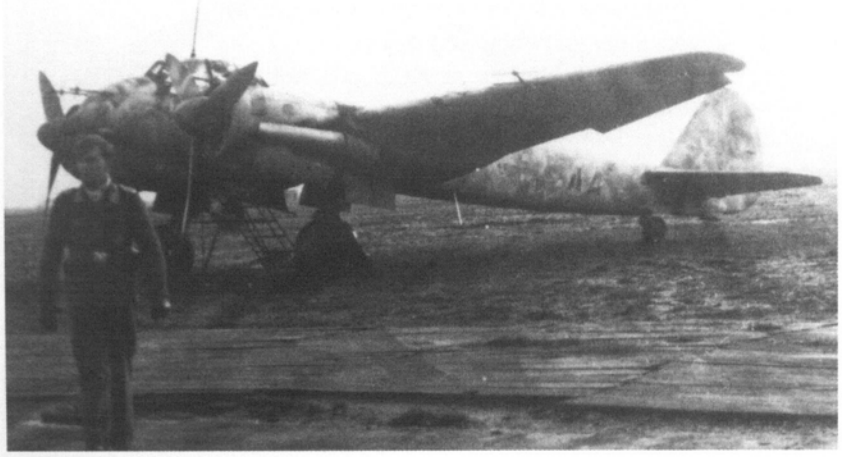
1. I./KG 40 would not be involved in anti-shipping operations until June 1944.

The final unit sent to attack the beachhead at Anzio was II./KG 40 which was now in action in force for the first time since the dreadful losses it suffered on 26 November 1943. As a result of there November 1943 experiences, II./KG 40 now only flew operations at night and only when shipping targets had been confirmed. So it was that on the night of 23 January, seven Heinkel 177s took off from Bordeaux, each laden with two Hs 293s and sixteen 50 kg (110 lb) flares destined for Nettuno; the attack was abortive as was the attack by another 11 aircraft the following night. It is believed that missions were flown on the nights of 23, 24 and 26 January 1944 during which seven Heinkel 177s were lost to heavy *Flak* and fighter defences. Those lost included *Hptm* Bernhard Kobrink, *Staffel Kapitän* of 4./KG 40, *Hptm* Hanns Ebersberger of 5. *Staffel* and *Hptm* Paul-Gerhardt Hofmann of 6. *Staffel*. What happened on the first two attacks is best described in the Interrogation Report of two captured crews *Oblt* Paul Dietrich and his crew from 4. *Staffel* shot down on 23 January and those captured from *Oblt* Fritz Hoppe's 5. *Staffel* crew shot down the following night:

> *"On 23 January, seven He 177s of II. Gruppe took off from Bordeaux-Merignac at 1330 hrs, each carrying two Hs 293 glider bombs under the wings and 16 50 kg flares in the internal stowage. They were to attack shipping in the area of the Nettuno beachhead at dusk.*
>
> *"For the first part of the course, the aircraft were to fly individually but they were to assemble at a point south of France and then to fly to the target and to attack in formation. The flares were carried in case it was found on arrival at the target that it was too dark for an ordinary visual attack to be made.*
>
> *"The flight did not work as expected; the aircraft were unable to fly in formation due to cloud and due to these cloud conditions, it was much darker than had been expected.*
>
> *"This aircraft climbed above the cloud to rendezvous with the other aircraft but when none were seen, descended in search for a target. After searching for an hour and a half without success, the crew decided to return to base and thinking they were near Genoa, flew on a course of 210 degrees. They must have been in fact near Elba and therefore passed over Corsica. They were then attacked by a fighter which set both engines on fire and with the exception of the tail gunner, the crew baled out and were captured.*
>
> *"The following day, 11 aircraft of the* Gruppe *took off from Bordeaux-Merignac to repeat the type of attack which had been planned for the previous evening. This aircraft, which had not flown the previous day, carried the same load of two Hs 29s and 16 flares. It flew via Avignon, the Gulf of Genoa and over land on a southerly course to Nettuno but whilst approaching was shot down by a night fighter. The crew jettisoned their bombs and baled out."*[2]



BELOW: Kommando Kunkel was a night fighter unit attached to I./ZG 1 and was later subsumed by III./ZG 1 whose purpose was to catch nocturnal Allied aircraft over the Bay of Biscay. This aircraft is believed to be the one flown by Hptm Fritz Kunkel.

It is believed that after the 26 January attack, II./KG 40 reverted to operating over the Bay of Biscay, although they made two fleeting visits back to the Mediterranean on 1 February and 31 March 1944. Meanwhile, attacks against both shipping and land targets continued but the scale of effort decreased after the first few days as a result of effective Allied anti-aircraft defences and high losses. The Allied cause was further helped by the bombing of the airfields at Salon, Montpellier and Istres on 27 January and the Italian airfield at Aviano on 28 January. However, II./KG 100

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[2] The kill on 23 January was credited to 2/Lt Clyde George of 414 Night Fighter Squadron; the kill on 24 January was credited to Flt Sgt John Scollan of 255 Squadron.

ABOVE: Lt Robert Baumann of 7./ZG 1 is rescued from a very calm Mediterranean after being shot down by a Beaufighter flown by Flt Sgt Freddie Cooper of 39 Squadron on 1 February 1944; Baumann was the only member of his crew to survive.

ABOVE: Flt Sgt Freddie Cooper (left) and his navigator are rescued from the Mediterranean on 2 February 1944 after being shot down by III./ZG 1 whilst defending convoy UGS 30. On board, they met Lt Robert Baumann of 7./ZG 1 whose Ju 88 C-6 they had shot down the night before.

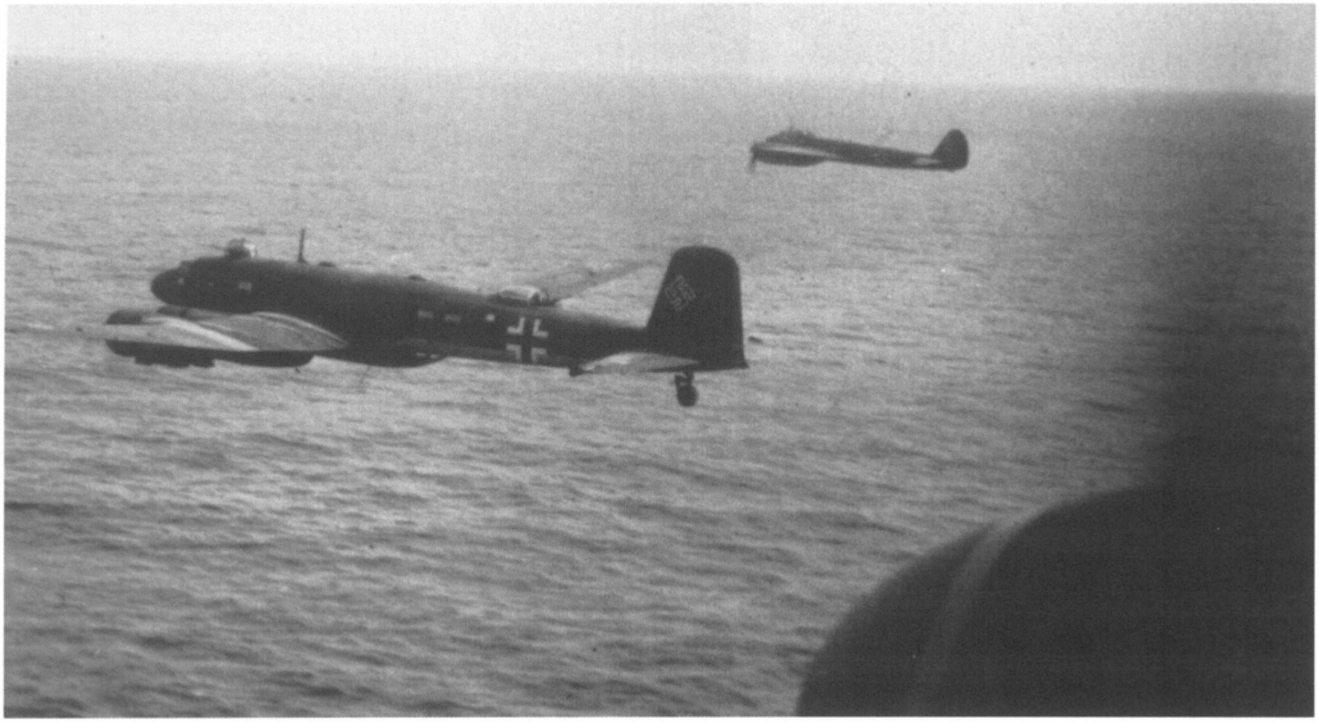
would continue to fly Hs 293 missions for another month, being credited with 10 sinkings and eight ships damaged in the period 23 January to 25 February 1944 but it was obvious that Anzio and Nettuno was a lost cause and most of those units quickly drafted in were sent away again. For example, the logbook from a crew member from 3./KG 30 shows just two missions over Anzio, the first on 12 February to drop anti-personnel bombs and then to drop a mine in the seas off Anzio on 13 February 1944; the following day, they flew northwards to Leck in Germany but did not recommence attacks against Britain until mid May 1944.

February 1944 would see just two major anti-shipping actions. On 1 February, eastbound convoy UGS 30, which had first been detected at 0740 hrs, was attacked that evening by a mixed force of Heinkel 111s from I./KG 26, Junkers 88s from III./KG 26 and Heinkel 177s from II./KG 40, all of whom were escorted by I. and the newly formed II. *Gruppen* of ZG 1. The success of the attack was greatly exaggerated by German High Command; instead of damaging a cruiser and seven freighters, just the freighter *Edward Bates* was lost. Again, German aircraft losses were high: the Heinkel 177 flown by *Ofw* Oskar Adam of 4./KG 40 was reported missing as were two crews from I./KG 26 and two from III./KG 26. A further Junkers 88 would crash on landing. *Uffz* Paul Moeller of 3./KG 26 was one of those shot down:

> *"The attack was timed for 2100 hrs, my own position was 'tail end Charlie' on the right-hand side. We flew a course correction whilst still in formation and during the turn, I lost contact so I continued alone and when lined up, I was shot at by the escort ships. The whole convoy seemed to be firing at me, the right engine failed whilst the other just rattled on. I released my torpedoes, turned away and prepared to ditch. The water was very calm and I put down on a moon beam. When I felt the tail wheel make contact, I pulled the stick back...we stopped dead and then floated in eerie silence, none of us were hurt. The next job was to get the dinghy pack out through the top hatch and once we were all safely in, we paddled a safe distance and watched our Heinkel disappear head first forever... We saw the searchlights from the convoy looking for us, we had been told that one hour after our attack, He 177s would be making another attack with guided bombs so we wanted to get as far away from the convoy as possible..."*

In addition to vicious anti-aircraft barrage, Beaufighters of 39 and 153 Squadrons accounted for three Junkers 88 destroyed plus one damaged. One of these was the Junkers 88 C-6 of 7./ZG 1 flown by *Uffz* Hellfried Schlegl; there was one more kill for the RAF and one more loss for 7./ZG 1 as *Lt* Robert Baumann recalls:

> *"We were tasked to escort a mixed bomber formation attacking a convoy near Oran, consisting of He 177s with guided bombs and Ju 88s and He 111s with torpedoes. Taking off at 1615 hrs, at 1800 hrs we met five Beaufighters and there was an air battle.*
>
> *"When we were attacked head-on, our starboard engine was hit and started leaking coolant. My over zealous* Bordfunker *threw off the canopy and I was forced to ditch. After ditching, the plane floated for a few seconds and sank, taking my* Beobachter *with it. Some minutes later the English plane ditched too.*



LEFT: Taken from a Ju 88 C-6 from I./ZG 1 escorting Condor of I./KG over the Atlantic

ABOVE: The tail of a Ju 88 C-6 of 7./ZG 7 shows three kill markings. Left is Fw Josef Merchen who was lost in combat with 157 Squadron 10 March 1944.

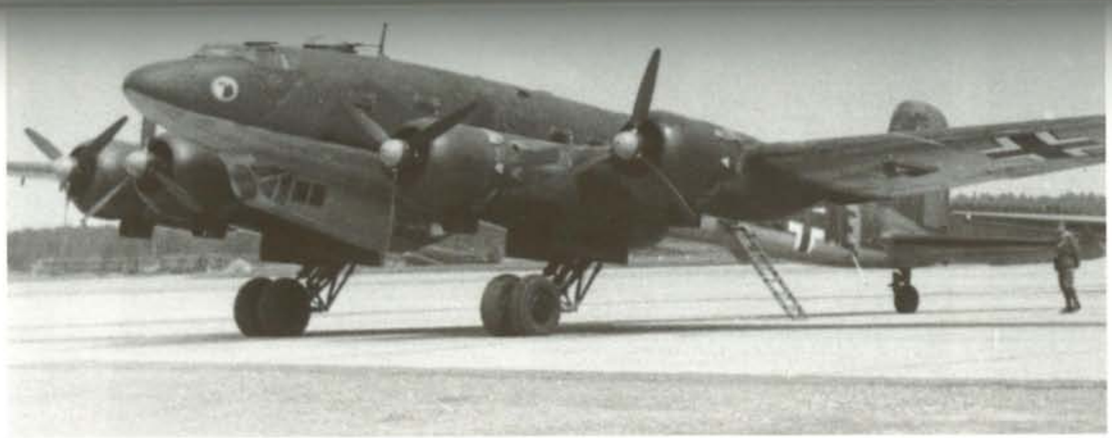
> *"The next morning, English planes were searching for the Beaufighter crew and found them. It was about midday when an Allied boat appeared and I was picked up; a few minutes later the English crew was picked up".*

Baumann had been shot down by Flt Sgt Freddie Cooper of 39 Squadron who in turn was shot down by Baumann, although credit for the kill was given to *Lt* Ulrich Hanshen:

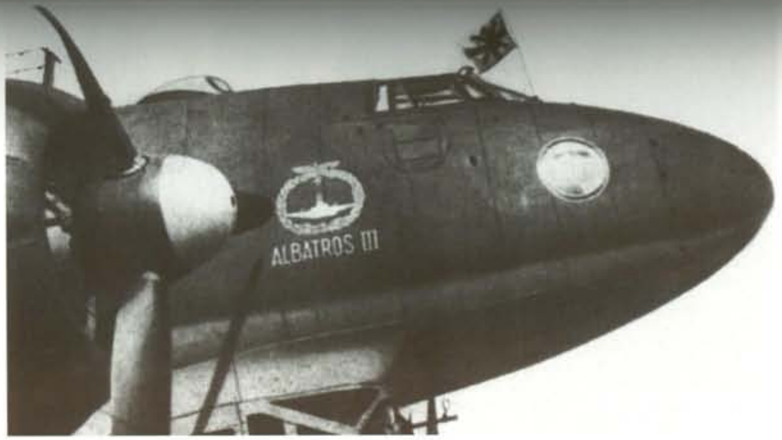
> *"I found myself in a head-on situation with a Ju 88 and let loose with my four cannon at fairly long range and just kept firing. His engine then blew up and I saw him ditch. By this time, my navigator was shouting that our port wing was on fire and I saw tracer streaming past the port side and then the intercom went dead. I turned steeply to port and found myself in the company of three Ju 88s with no other soul in sight. The four of us just went round in ever decreasing circles whilst the fire in the port wing burned brighter. In the end, I realised that my only hope of survival was to put the aircraft in the water before the wing tanks blew up...The water was like glass, the tracer was still coming past the cockpit and in my anxiety, I forgot to lower the flaps. It seems a miracle that we ditched without mishap..."*

That was the only major anti-shipping action in the Mediterranean for February 1944 but 12 days later, the scene of battle switched back to the Bay of Biscay. The target this time was the south-bound convoy OS 67/KMS 41. The convoy consisted of the carrier *Pursuer* which carried two squadrons of Grumman Martlets. Earlier that afternoon, a formation of Hs 293-armed Heinkel 177s and Condors from II. and III./KG 40 took off from Bordeaux; being slower, the Condors had taken off first only to be intercepted by three Mosquitoes of 157 Squadron; *Uffz* Werner Zerrahn, now of *Stab* III./KG 40, was on board one of the Condors:

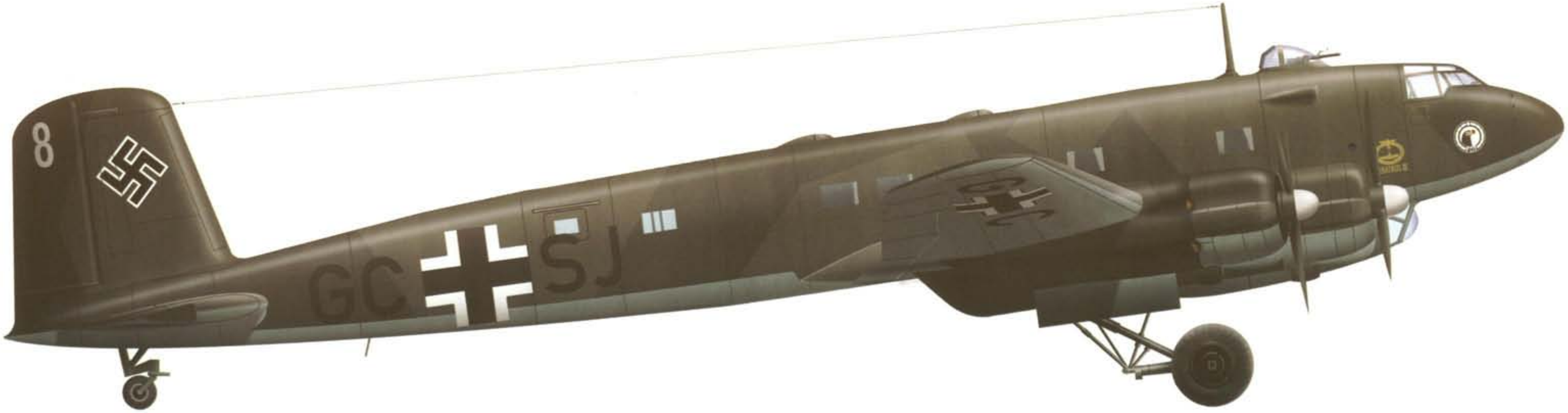
> *"We had taken off with about five or six Condors and were on our way out when we spotted some twin-engined planes starboard and ahead and assumed that this would be our escort from I./ZG 1. However, when the planes adopted an attacking position by flying a steep turn, we realised that they were enemy aircraft. As far as I can remember, we came under attack only once and that is why I assume that they had been Mosquitoes, they probably turned away because of their lightweight wooden construction and of the concentrated return fire from all of our 20 mm cannon-equipped turrets.*



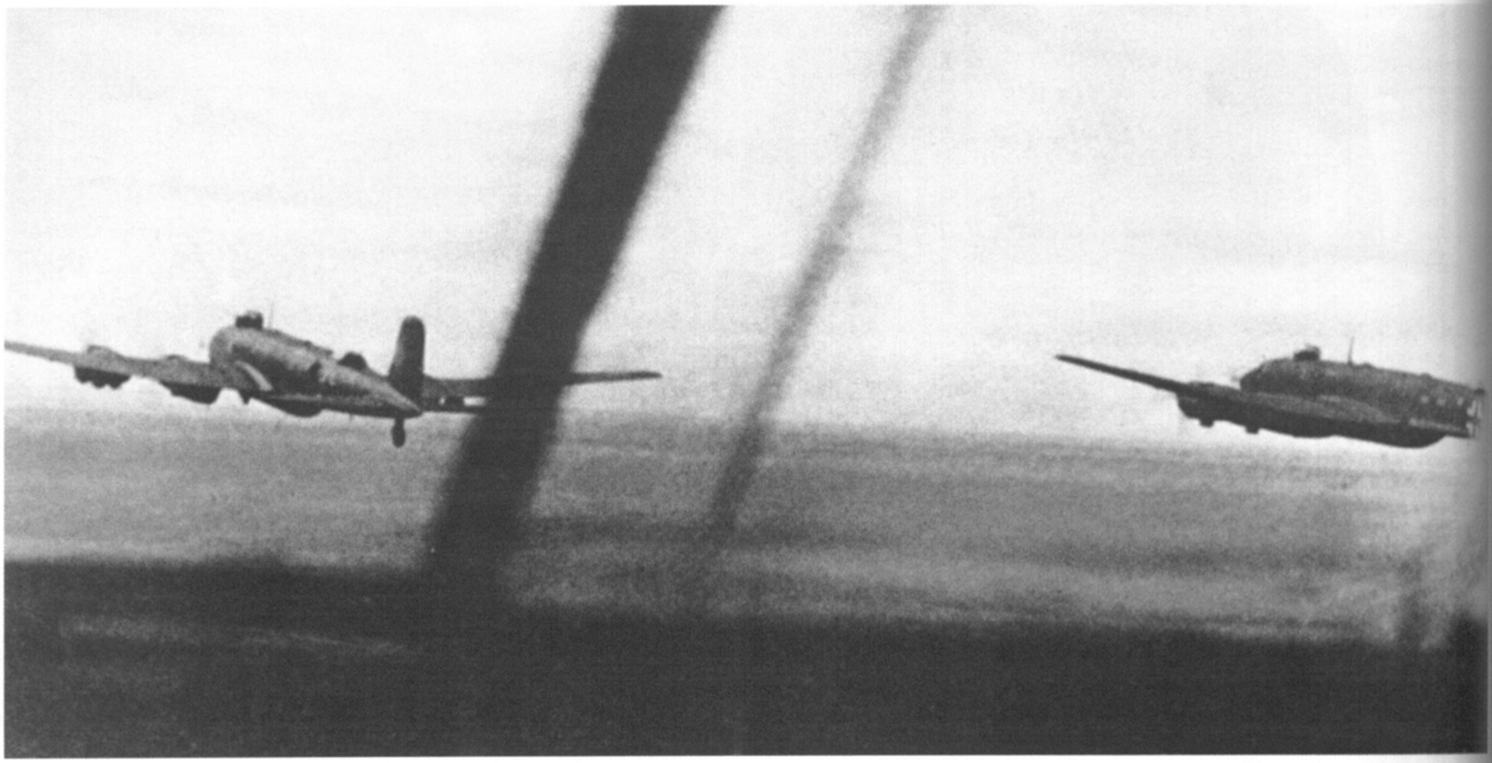
ABOVE: Condors with a difference: Fw 200 C-4/U1 of the Regierungsstaffel (Government Officials' Squadron) showing the splinter camouflage pattern of RLM 72/73 on the uppersurfaces and RLM 65 underneath. The aircraft of this Staffel normally retained the factory code and, unfortunately in this case, only the letters 'AE' are visible on both the fuselage and under the port wing. The first two first letters are not known for certain but could be 'GC' which would make it the aircraft that belonged to Heinrich Himmler, which was later captured by the British and brought to Farnborough as AIR MIN 94. Note the Regierungsstaffel emblem of an eagle painted on a circular background on the nose and the yellow spinner tips and fuselage band. Of particular note with the C-4/U1 model was the foreshortened and slightly bulged ventral gondola and a second low-drag Fw 19 turret situated on the aft fuselage.



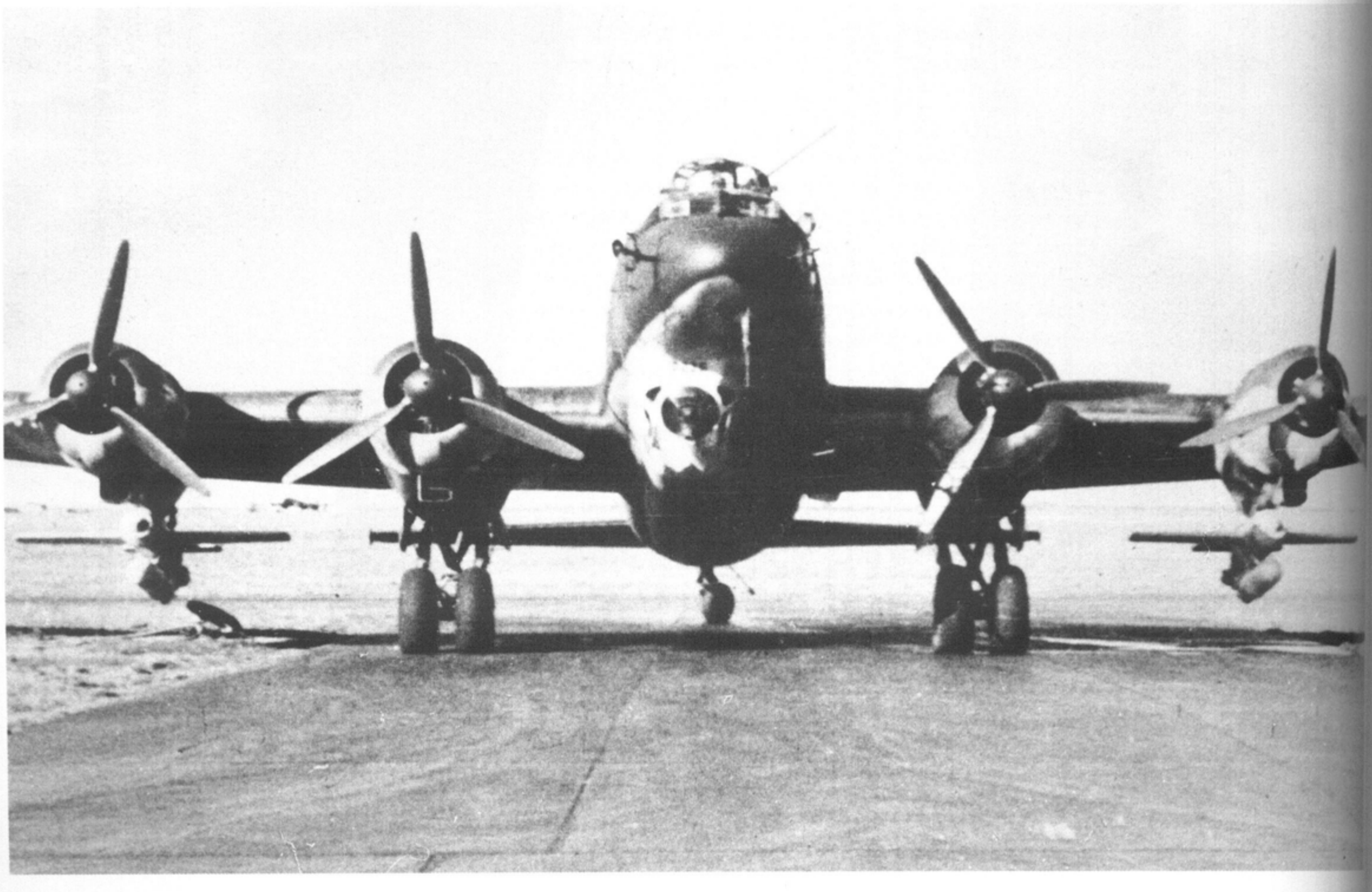
ABOVE: This Regierungsstaffel aircraft, an Fw 200 C-4/U2 belonged to Grossadmiral Karl Dönitz. It carried the factory code GC+SJ on the fuselage and also under the wings in black. The aircraft was camouflaged in the same way as that of Heinrich Himmler's including the yellow spinner tips and fuselage band. The flag flying above the cockpit is the pennant of the Grossadmiral, consisting of an Iron Cross with two diagonally crossed battens mounted on an eagle on a white background.



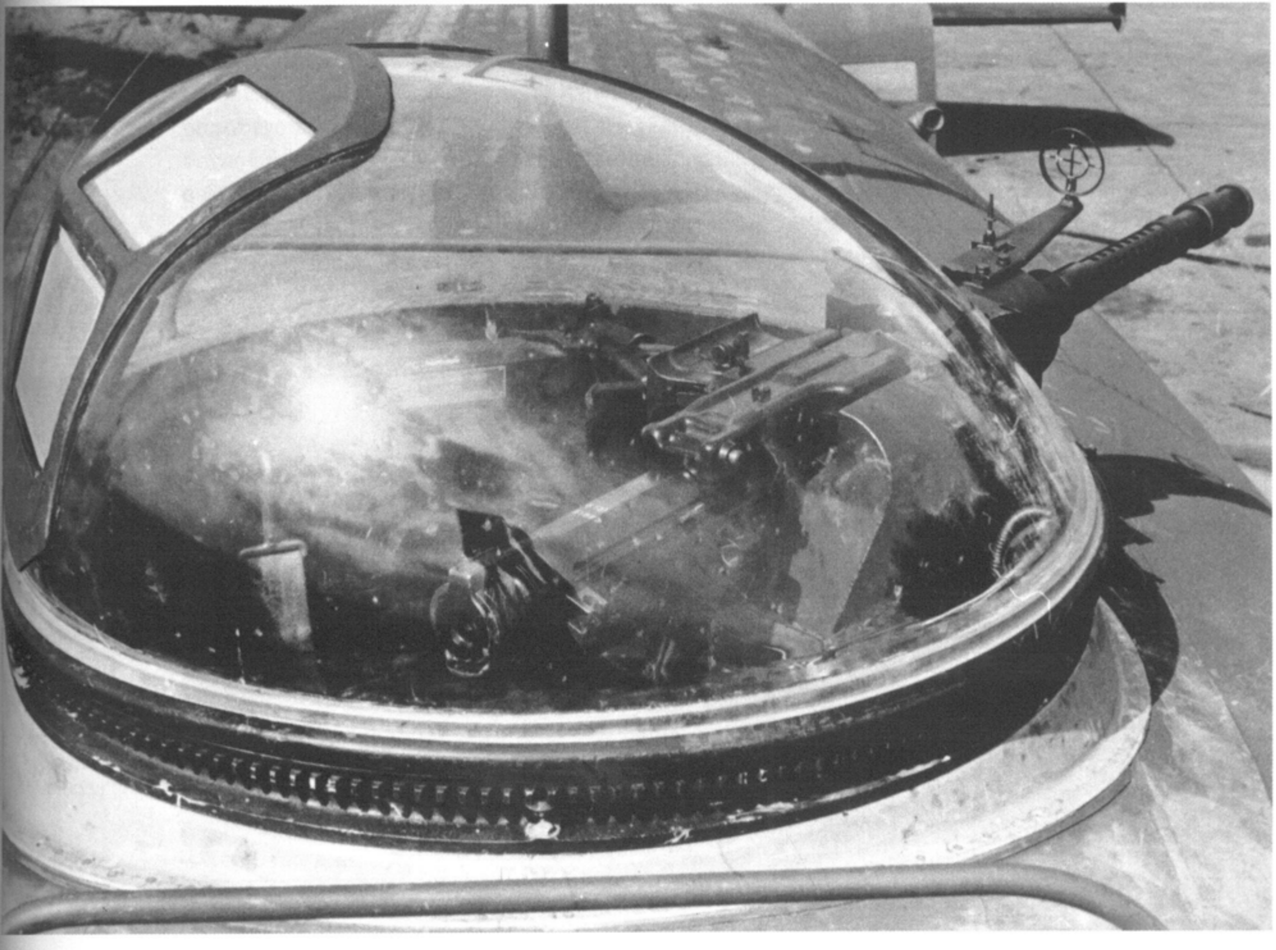
Focke-Wulf Fw 200 C-4/U2, W.Nr. 0181, coded GC+SJ, of the Regierungsstaffel was used by Grossadmiral Karl Dönitz
This aircraft had the splinter pattern of RLM 72/73 on the uppersurfaces and RLM 65 underneath. The emblem painted in gold yellow on the side of the nose, 'ALBATROS III' represented the Submariner's War Badge, which was awarded to all U-boat crews in the Kriegsmarine. The Regierungsstaffel emblem of an eagle painted on a circular background was also painted on the nose.



ABOVE: Two Fw 200 C-4s photographed from the cockpit of another Condor low over the sea. When approaching their reconnaissance area they normally flew in formation at sea-level for protection, before splitting up on their assigned shipping search.



ABOVE: Front view of an Fw 200 C-8/U10 Condor loaded with two Hs 293 anti-shipping glide bombs. The FuG 200 Hohentwiel ship search, C-8 saw little service, as by the time they came into production in late 1943 and early 1944, the days of the Condor in its anti-shipping role were numbered - not helped by the loss of its bases on the Biscay coast and increased air protection for the Allied convoys.



ABOVE:
Fw 200 C-4 of Stab III./KG 40 coded F8+AD returns from a mission and heads inland towards Bordeaux-Merignac.

LEFT: Detail photograph of a low-drag Fw 19 hydraulically-operated turret with a single 7.9 mm. MG 15 machine gun in the A-Stand on an Fw 200 C-3. At the bottom of the picture can be seen a portion of the curved tubing forming part of the blast guard to prevent the machine gun from firing into the cockpit.

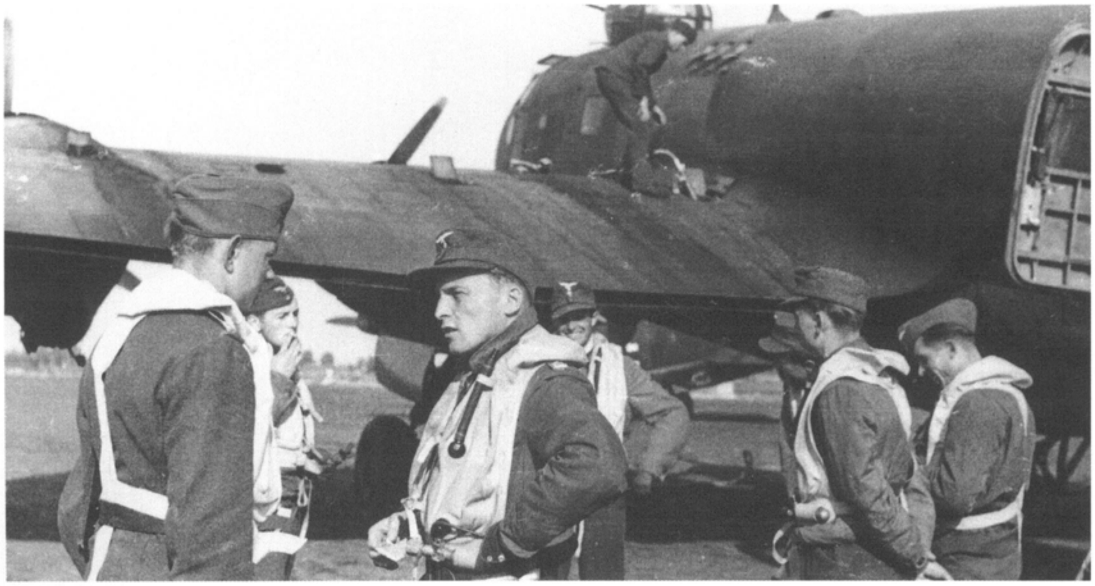
> *"We escaped with no more than minor damage, I had a bullet graze to my left foot but when we were on the ground, we found that we had a lot of luck because we found 130 bullet holes in our Condor."*

One other Condor was damaged and a crew member wounded; it is not certain whether the Condor flown by *Fw* Karl-Heinz Schairer of 7./KG 40 was shot down by three Mosquitoes or later by gunfire from the convoy of one of the defending Grumman Wildcats. Nevertheless, that evening, the convoy was warned of an imminent air attack and radar detected enemy aircraft and four Wildcats of 890 Squadron were scrambled; one of the pilots was Lt. Lawrie Brander:

> *"Heading east, what was that dim light heading west towards the convoy? Not one of us, we should all be heading east so I turned towards it and saw the bloody great shape of a big aeroplane. Obviously no friend of mine so I opened fire. Easy to go too close in the dark and knock down your target with a collision so I broke away and started again. This time it was easy because the beast was on fire. One ring deflection; not a word of complaint from the rear gunner. When I was astern of it, a parachute opened and the thing blew up, both too close for comfort. It all went very well for me, didn't surely know whether it was a He 177 or a Condor as all I had seen was the tail and that seemed like a He 177.*
>
> *"Then I saw another one and went in but he must have dropped his bomb because he climbed so steeply and slowly that I stalled trying to get a bead on him. Here the cloud was more broken and his rear gunner very active so I could see where he was but couldn't match his rate of climb. He disappeared into cloud and I lost contact."*

The convoy sailed on undamaged, leaving behind it the wreckage of *Maj* Walter Rieder's Heinkel 177. Command of II. Gruppe now passed to *Maj* Hans Dochtermann, *Staffel Kapitän* of 5 *Staffel*. For the next three months, the Heinkel 177s would see little action but would continue to fall prey to roving Allied long-range fighter sweeps.

For March and April 1944, all the action was back in the Mediterranean. Convoys were attacked by the usual units, reinforced by I. and III./KG 77 which returned to southern France in the second week in March. On 8 March[3], convoy 'Hannah' was attacked by III./KG 26 and II./KG 100 escorted by I./ZG 1. The heavy Allied fighter cover thwarted the attack, claiming two Junkers 88s destroyed, one probable and one damaged. Two aircraft from I./ZG 1 failed to return and another, believed damaged in the combat, collided with a crane in Marseilles docks. III./KG 26 lost one aircraft and 6./KG 100 a Dornier 217. On 19 March, I. and III./KG 26 attacked convoy 'Illicit' without success; III. *Gruppe* lost



LEFT: The crew of a Condor prepare themselves for an over-water operation. All wear Schwimmweste pneumatisch 734 10-30 (SWp 734) inflatable life vests and a mixture of Fliegermütze (flyer's cap) and Bergmütze (mountain cap). Note that three of the five fuel filler points for the internal fuselage tanks are open on the upper fuselage.

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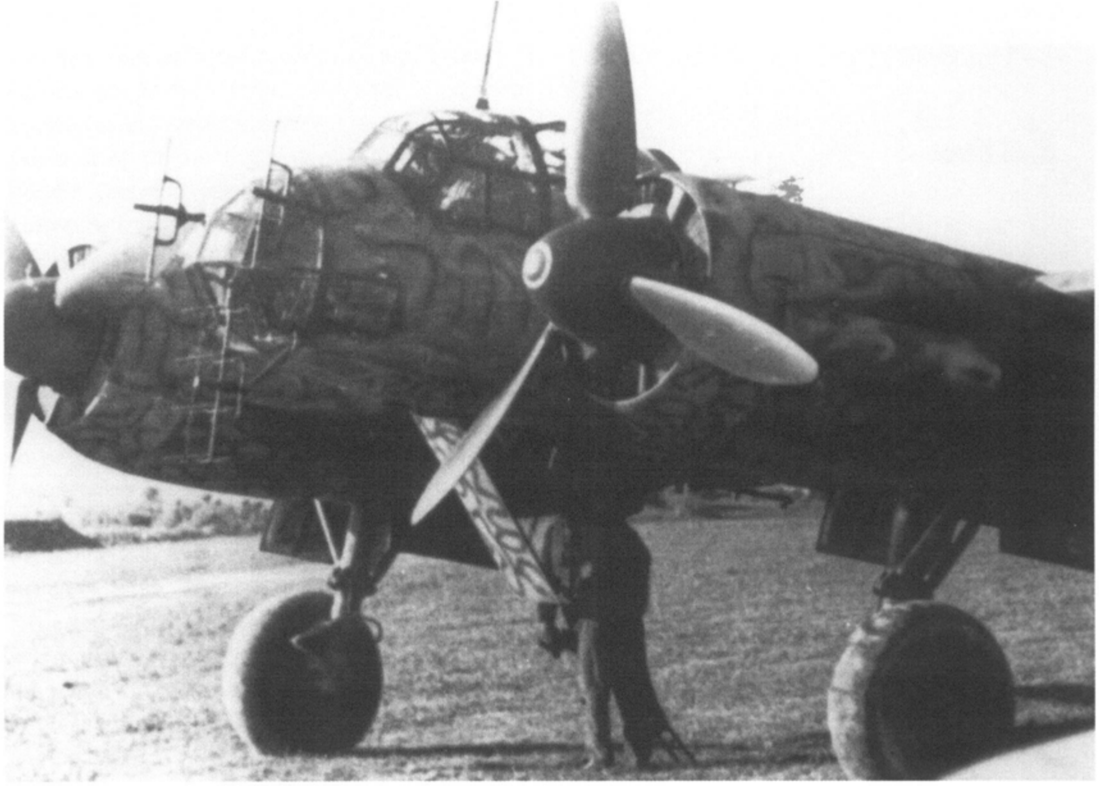
[3] It is believed that elements of I./KG 77 arrived at La Jasse on 22 January but it did not commence operations until March.



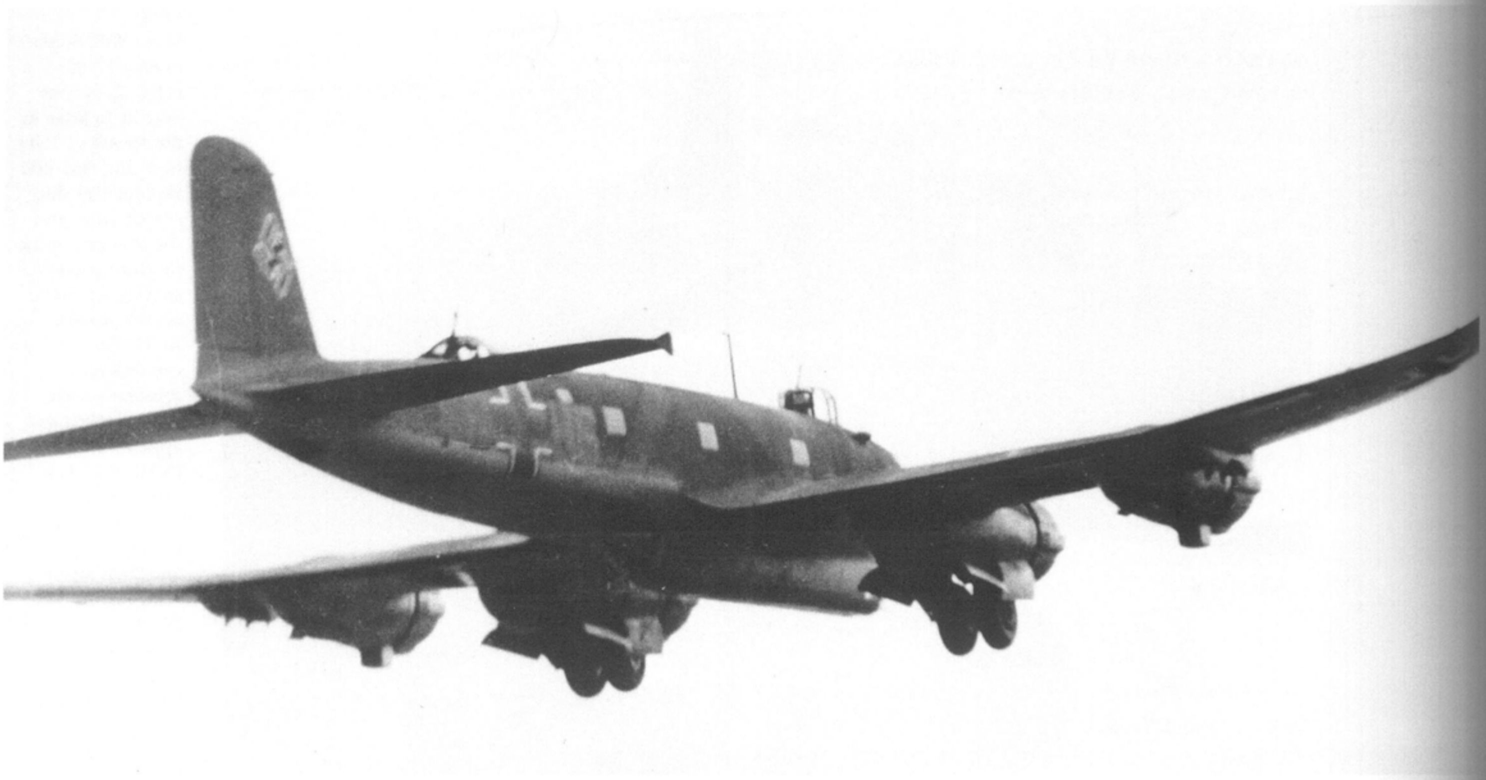
LEFT:
Major Willi Solter's Ju 88 A-17 of I./KG 77 is seen here at La Jasse in the spring of 1944. Note the FuG 200 Hohentwiel ship search radar and the absence of the fuselage gondola, - sometimes found on this mark of Ju 88. The camouflage scheme is very non-standard and appears to be a mixture of RLM 79 sand-yellow oversprayed again in lines of RLM 76 and then again with further lines of either RLM 70 or 71 which was extended to the underside of the aircraft.

three aircraft. Then on 29 March, convoy 'Thumbs Up' was unsuccessfully attacked by I. and III./KG 26 and II./KG 100; III./KG 26 lost an aircraft and II./KG 100 lost three. The final attack was against convoy 'Tenant' on 31 March. It is difficult to assess which units were involved as they attacked in three waves throughout the night of 31 March/1 April. Again, despite torpedoing one freighter, III./KG 26 lost three aircraft whilst I. and III./KG 77, on their first *Luft Torpedo* mission since returning to the Mediterranean, lost six aircraft. It was obvious that so many losses for virtually no successes was gradually bleeding the anti-shipping units dry.

Further north, the Arctic convoys had restarted but there were very few anti-shipping aircraft to attack them. Those aircraft which had the range shadowed the convoys, calling in U-boats and attacking if they could but the Allies had air superiority in and around the convoys thanks to continued use of escort carriers. By example, Convoy JW 58, which sailed on 27 March 1944 was accompanied by the escort carriers *Tracker* and *Activity.* On 30 March, a Junkers 88 shadowing the convoy was shot down by Wildcats flown by Lt Lange and S/Lt Yeo of 846 Squadron; the following day was a field day for the convoy as 819 Squadron's diary extract records:

> *"Friday 31 March. 0925 hrs* S/Lt *Simon and Swift flew off to intercept a bandit. Weather was bad and at the limit of their endurance, they sighted and attacked. The port outer engine was set on fire, then the starboard inner. The attack took place at very low level over the sea. The aircraft crashed in flames and smoke was easily visible from the ship. S/*Lt *Simon's aircraft was holed in the leading edge.*
>
> *"1310 hrs* S/Lt *Wilcocks and Bowles were sent off to intercept a bandit. Low visibility and 10/10th prevented this. Tracker sent off Wildcats* [S/Lt. Debney and Meed, 846 Squadron] *which shot this aircraft, a Fw 200, down.*
>
> *"1800 hrs* Lt *Sangster and* S/Lt *Beeston flew off to intercept a bandit. At 1820 hrs they shot down the Fw 200. First its port outer was set on fire, then its starboard inner and then again the port outer which had been extinguished. The enemy cartwheeled into the sea and smoke was seen from the ship."*

It had been a dreadful day for 3./KG 40, *Oblt* Werner Klomp, *Oblt* Alfred Weyer, *Uffz* Alfred Göbel and their crews, a total of 20 aircrew, were all killed. It would continue to be a dreadful convoy for the Germans who would lose a Blohm und Voss 138 on 1 April and a Junkers 88 the day, after whilst four



ABOVE: Said to be a Fw 200 C-4, W.Nr. 0118, coded F8+HS of 8./KG 40. It is shown here taking off at its French base. Of some interest is the retracted tail wheel, most pictures of Condors on operations show them non-retracted.

RIGHT: Crews from I./KG 77 seen planning an anti-shipping mission at La Jasse, southern France, spring 1944.

RIGHT: Generalleutnant Alexander Holle, Fliegerführer Atlantik, seen reviewing crews from 3(F)/Aufklärungsgruppe 123 at Rennes.

U-boats were sunk before the convoy arrived in Russia on 5 April 1944. Although it was not obvious at the time, 31 March 1944 heralded the death knell of the Focke-Wulf 200 Condor; the Condor was too vulnerable and its part in the *Luftwaffe's* anti-shipping war all but ceased from this day on, the Condor generally reverting to transport duties.

March 1944 also saw the death knell of the post of *Fliegerführer Atlantik*. The title was abolished and *Genlt* Kessler who had held this post since the start of 1942, was sent to Tokyo to be the Air Attaché. *Fliegerführer Atlantik* now became X. *Fliegerkorps* and command was given to *Genlt* Alexander Holle. Holle had considerable experience in anti-shipping operations having been *Kommodore* of KG 26 in early 1941 and then *Fliegerführer Nord, Fliegerführer Nord (West)* and *Fliegerführer Nord (Ost)*, amongst other posts. This change was thought to enable better coordination of anti-shipping forces when the Allied invasion came and on paper, the forces at its disposal were impressive. With *Fliegerdivision* 2 subordinated, after the invasion on 6 June 1944, X. *Fliegerkorps* had *Stab* and III./KG 40 with just over 30 Condors, 1., 2. and II./KG 40 with over 20 Heinkel 177s whilst 2. *Fliegerdivision* had *Stab*, II and III./KG 26 with over 50 Junkers 88s, *Stab*, I. and III./KG 77 with over 40 Junkers 88s and *Stab* and III./KG 100 with over 25 Dornier 217s anti-shipping capable. In reality, vulnerability, attrition and Allied air superiority would hamstring X. *Fliegerkorps* and 2. *Fliegerdivision*.

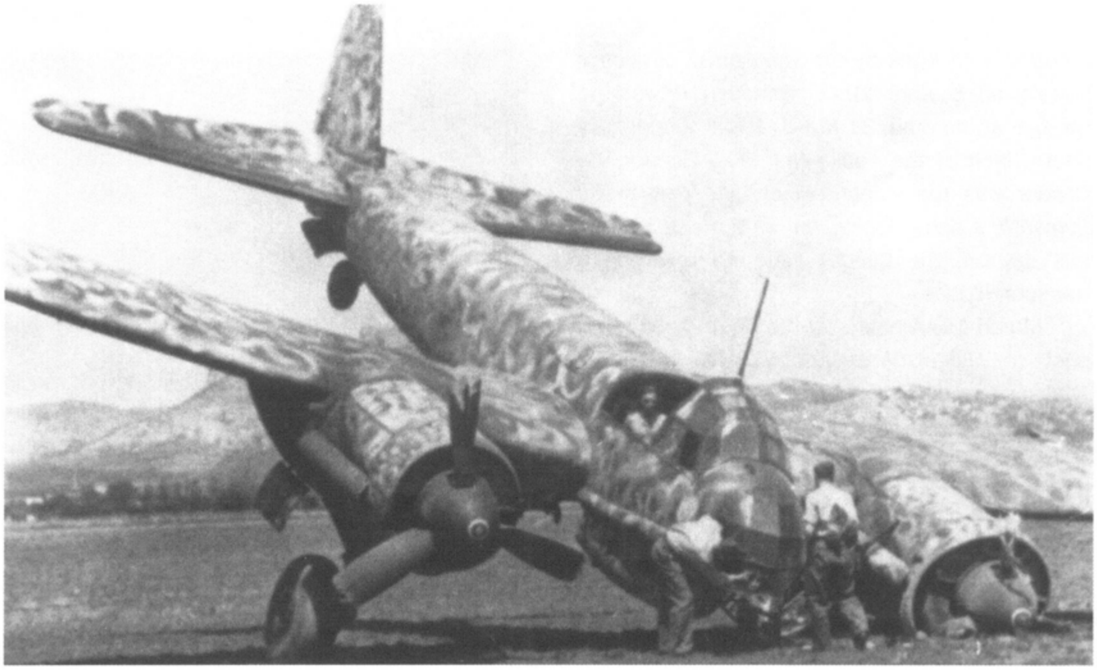
ABOVE: Major Willi Sölter, Kommandeur of I./KG 77 (right), at La Jasse in Spring 1944.

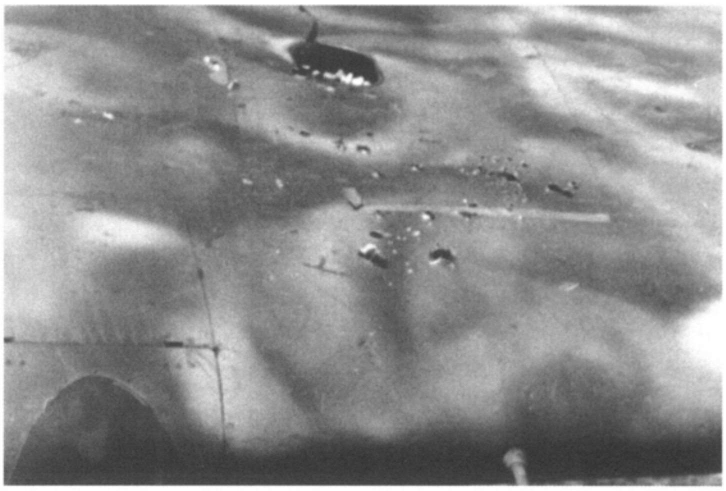
April 1944 saw the Mediterranean anti-shipping actions continue to drain aircraft and crews. Convoy 'Aertex' on 12 April 1944 suffered a damaged freighter but *Flak* and fighters accounted for seven Junkers 88s from I. and III./KG 77 and one Dornier 217 from 5./KG 100. The attack on convoys 'Whoopee' and 'Donaghue' on the night of 20 April 1944 were more successful for the *Luftwaffe;* a troopship, two freighters and a destroyer were sunk and two freighters damaged but four Junkers 88s from I. and III./KG 77, one Junkers 88 from III./KG 26 and two Dornier 217s from 6./KG 100 were shot down, one from the latter unit being commanded by the *Staffel Kapitän, Hptm* Willi Scholl. The escort from I. and III./ZG 1 also lost four aircraft, including that of the *Staffel Kapitän* of 7./ZG 1, *Oblt* Martin Reuter. One of the successful anti-shipping pilots that night was *Hptm* Walter Kipfmüller, *Staffel Kapitän of 2./*KG 77 who was credited with sinking one of the freighters. Kipfmüller had begun his anti-shipping career with 1./Kü.Fl.Gr 606 in 1941, being badly wounded in an anti-shipping mission over the Channel on the night of 9/10 August 1941. He rejoined what was then 2./KG*r* 606 at the end of 1941 only to be shot down again over Malta on 23 March 1942. However, by April 1944, the 24-year-old Kipfmüller had been awarded the *Deutsches Kreuz in Gold* (15 October 1942) and the *Ritterkreuz* (29 October 1943) and would survive the war having been credited with sinking 30,000 BRT of enemy shipping.

BELOW: Crews of I/KG 77, are seen here at La Jasse, May 1944 with a Ju 88 A-17 in the background.

May 1944 would see the anti-shipping units being largely inactive with major attacks occurring only on 11 and 30 May. It was a sign of desperation that for the attack on convoy 'Element' on 11 May, which had been shadowed for two days previously, the German propaganda claimed that their aircraft had sunk seven freighters and a destroyer and damaged 12 freighters, a tanker, a cruiser and two more destroyers. Even the logbook of *Oblt* Kurt Becker of 2./KG 77 says that his *Gruppe* took off from La Jasse at 1810 hours and attacked a large convoy in *PlQ* 4712/03

RIGHT: A Ju 88 A-17 of 3./KG 77 after suffering flak damage during a convoy attack in 1944. This aircraft appears to be similarly camouflaged as that on page 169 and shows that the modified camouflage had been sprayed completely over the whole upper and side surfaces including the unit codes, Balkenkreuze and Hakenkreuze on the fin.





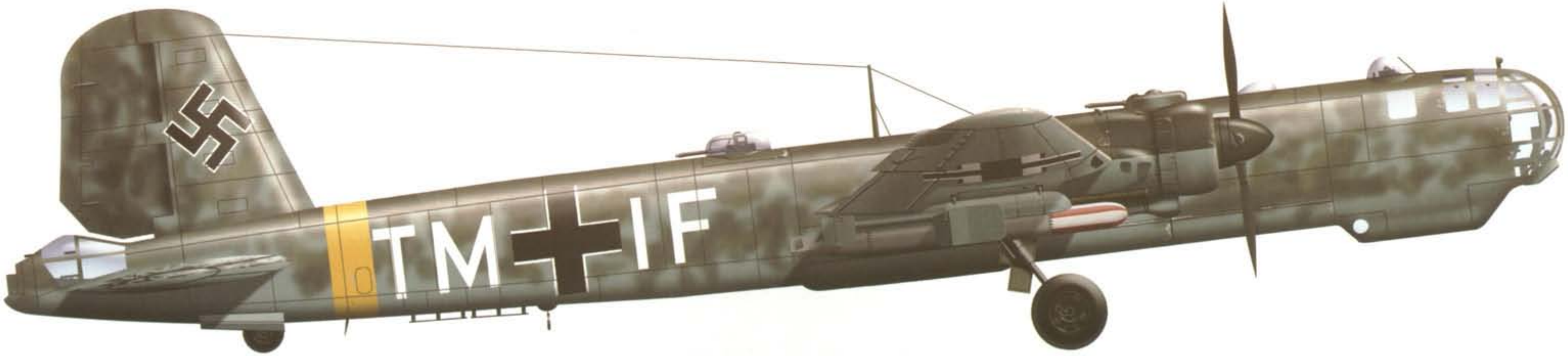
ABOVE: Hptm Walter Kipfmüller of 2./KG 77 being awarded the Ritterkreuz by Major Wilhelm Stemmler (left), Kommodore of KG 77, on 29 October 1943.

Ost. He attacked and hit a 'liberty freighter of 7,000 BRT' but never saw the outcome because of fog. However, the results could not have been further from the truth. No ships were hit whilst *Flak,* Beaufighters from 153 and 256 Squadron and accidents were responsible for the loss of a Junkers 88 C-6 from the escorting 8./ZG 1, two Junkers 88s from each *Staffel* of III./KG 26 (as well as another 8. *Staffel* aircraft crashing on its return with the death of all four crew members). Additionally 2./KG 77 lost a Junkers 88 on landing, another shot down by German fighters and another missing; 3./KG 77 had an aircraft crash off the Spanish coast and another missing during the attack. III./KG 77 suffered similarly, one aircraft from 7. *Staffel*, two from 8. *Staffel* including the *Staffel Kapitän Oblt* Helmuth Prager, and one from 9. *Staffel*. This one failed attack cost a total of 18 aircraft and the deaths of 56 aircrew.

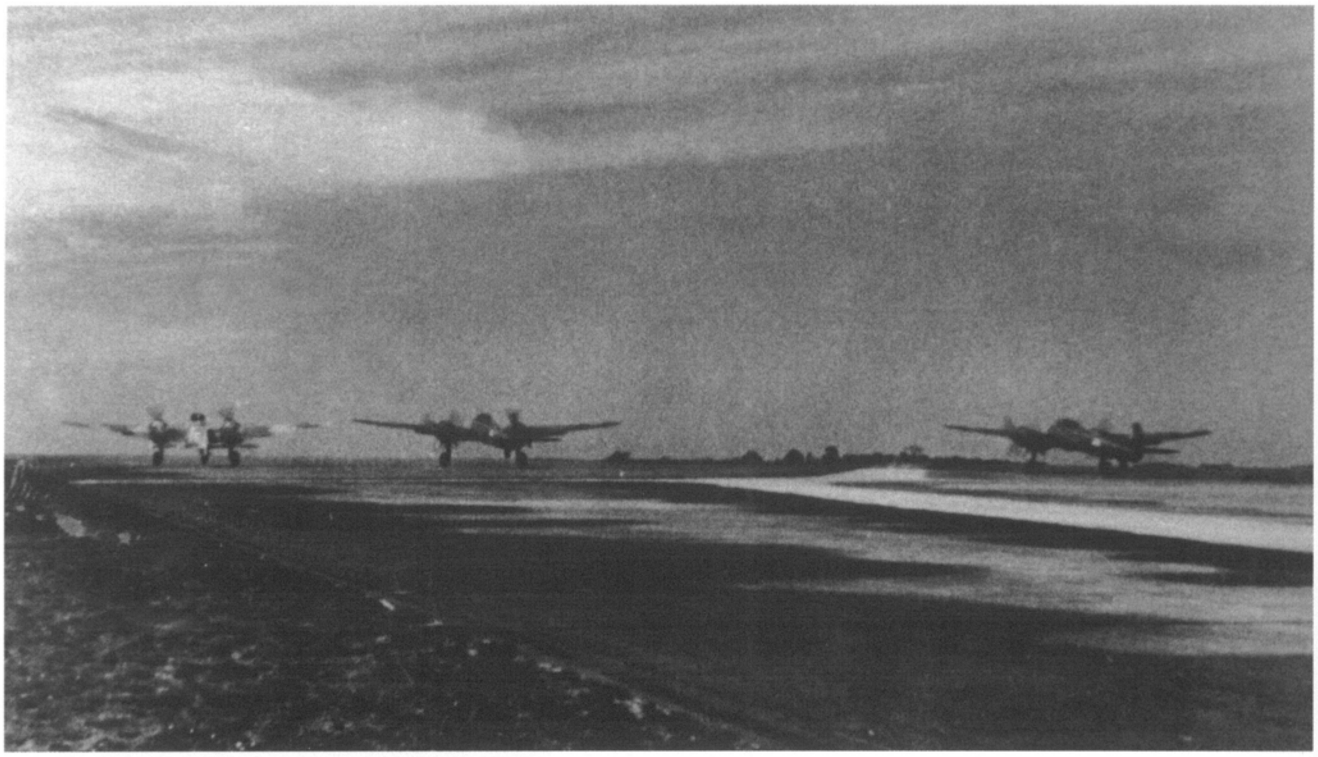
It is not surprising that, with these losses, only one more anti-shipping attack was flown in May 1944 before events in Normandy drew the *Luftwaffe's* focus northwards. This time, convoy 'Earphone' was attacked by a much smaller force on the night of 30/31 May 1944. Using Junkers 88s from *Hptm* Siegfried Geisler's II./KG 76 as pathfinders/target illumination, in the region of 25 aircraft attacked and were responsible for sinking the freighter *Nordeflinge*. However, not all went to plan as an Allied report of the attack mentions:

> *"A formation of illuminator aircraft was instructed to set its flares over the red markers at 2224 hrs. The flares were apparently set north of the red markers since an order, couched in obscene language, to the effect that they should be placed further south was heard at 2230 hours."*

LEFT: This Arado-built He 177 A-5, coded TM+IF, was used extensively as a test aircraft at the Luftwaffe test centre at Gotenhafen for torpedo-dropping trials with the L 10 miniature glider used to carry the LT F5b torpedo (see page 188 for more details).



Heinkel He 177 A-5, W.Nr. 550202, coded TM+IF
The aircraft was finished in the standard factory paint scheme of RLM 70/71 on the uppersurfaces with RLM 65 underneath, with the additional mottle of RLM 71/02 applied to the fuselage sides. The factory code letters TM+IF were in white and the rear fuselage band was yellow. The code letters were also painted under the wing, with T+M appearing on the starboard side and I+F on the port. During test operations it was also normal for all defensive armament to be removed.



LEFT: 14./KG 40 Ju 88 C-6s head out on a patrol, summer 1943.

Again, for such a small force, there were losses. 6./KG 76 lost its *Staffel Kapitän*, the *Ritterkreuz* and *Deutsches Kreuz in Gold* holder *Oblt* Hans Ebersbach whilst I./KG 77 lost an aircraft from each of its *Staffeln*. A further Junkers 88 from 2./KG 77 flown by *Ofw* Kurt Springer was forced to return with engine trouble and was instructed to land at Istres, still carrying its torpedoes. What Springer did not know was that in his way was a Beaufighter of 108 Squadron flown by Flt Lt Harry Smith:

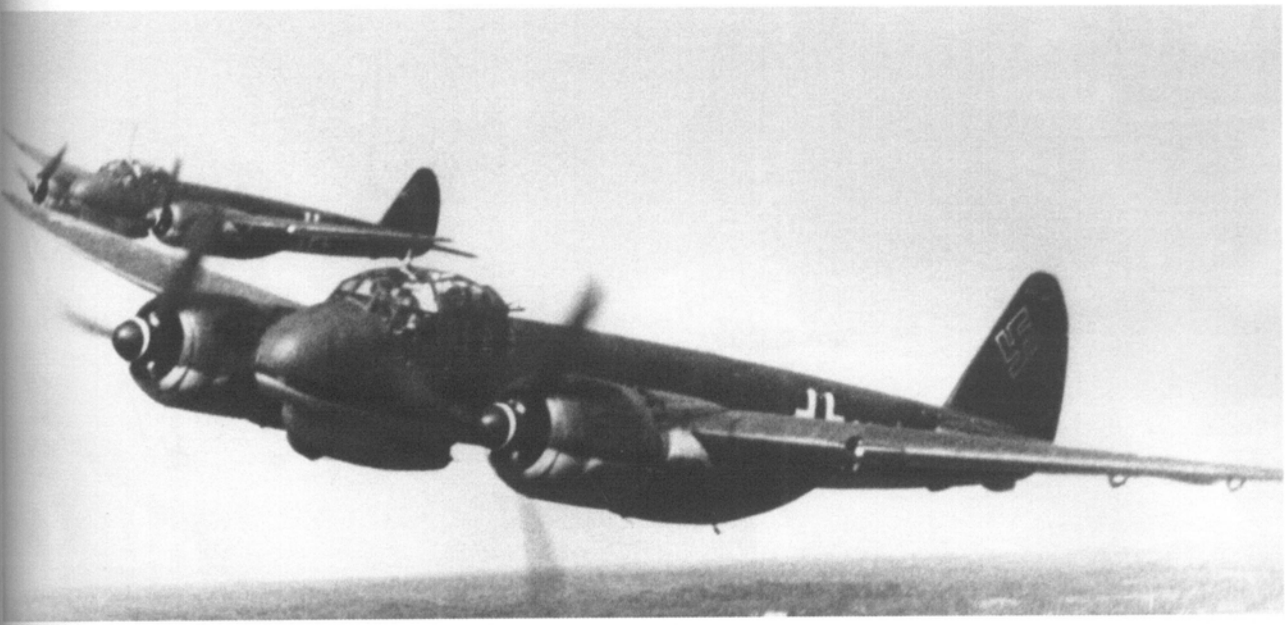
> *"Three unidentified aircraft seen fleeting, flicking nav lights on and off. Red cartridges were fired from ground. Did tight orbit to port around runway and sighted enemy aircraft 4 miles away…Identified it as Ju 88. Opened fire five degrees above from dead astern, range about 1,000 yards. Strikes observed on mainplane. Enemy aircraft put on two green downward recognition lights. Beaufighter overshot and enemy aircraft turned to port on southerly heading eight miles north of aerodrome. Made a second attack from dead astern, opened fire from 50 yards, the starboard engine caught fire and pieces were seen to fly off. Beaufighter broke away to port. Enemy aircraft seen to be trying to land in steep glide. Crash-landed, swung to port and burst into flames…"*

BELOW: Lt. Ulrich Laubis of 3./KG 77 conducts a briefing for the 11 May 1944 attack.

With its starboard engine on fire, Springer managed to crash-land. Both he, his *Beobachter Uffz* Siegfried Penzel and *Bordfunker Fw* Willi Breitenfeld were slightly injured; the gunner *Uffz* Josef Erbel was seriously injured in the crash-landing and died shortly afterwards. Although they mentioned the presence of night fighters, neither Springer nor Penzel thought that they had been attacked over Istres and that the Beaufighter had caused their engine to burst into flames so it is probable that Harry Smith shot down the Junkers 88 flown by *Oblt* Hans Ebersbach of 6./KG 76.

A week later, the Allies invaded Normandy and the *Luftwaffe* was forced to rush reinforcements within range of the beachhead. The first of 2. *Jagdkorps'* units to be sent to the skies over Normandy were the Junkers 88 C-6s and R-2s of ZG 1. For the weeks preceding the Invasion, they had carried out anti-invasion patrols so it came as no surprise that on the afternoon of 6 June 1944, they were committed to battle, as *Uffz* Aegidius Berzborn recalls:

> *"The days before the Invasion began, there had been permanent air attacks on our bases so that we were often forced to move to other airfields. Then came the 'Longest Day', the Invasion. I do not remember how many missions we flew to the Orne Estuary and for those missions, our planes carried bombs under the wings.*



LEFT: Two BMW 801 MA powered Ju 88 R-2s of I./ZG 1. Although this variant was produced as a night fighter, the aircraft operated by ZG 1 were used in the role of high-speed destroyers. These machines were camouflaged in the splinter pattern of RLM 70/71 with RLM 65 underneath. The spinner tips were painted red with a white ring in the centre.

> *Our losses during these attacks were enormous. I saw how my comrades were butchered. The combats were so cruel and the enemy's air superiority was overwhelming…"*

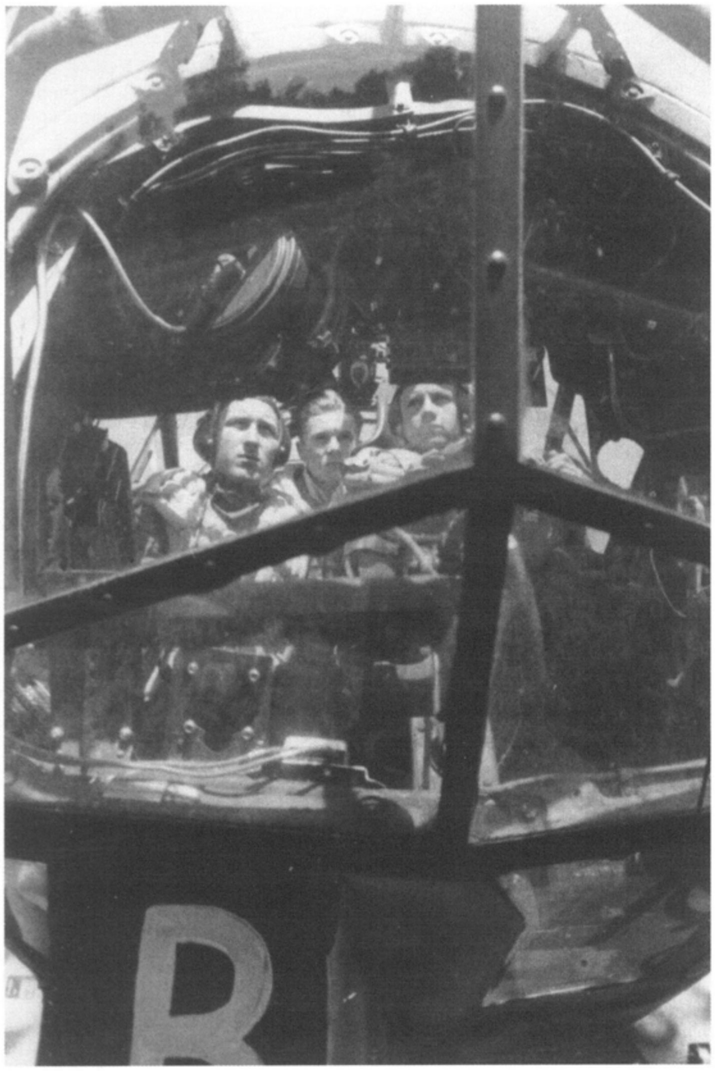
To pit what was a long-range twin-engined maritime fighter unit against superior single-seat fighters and Allied air superiority was nothing short of murder. In three days, ZG 1 lost at least 18 aircraft with 26 aircrew killed, three taken prisoners of war and seven wounded. ZG 1 was withdrawn from the battle and on 5 August 1944 was disbanded, its aircrew dispersed to other units including, in another catastrophic decision, some of its pilots to single-seat fighter units.

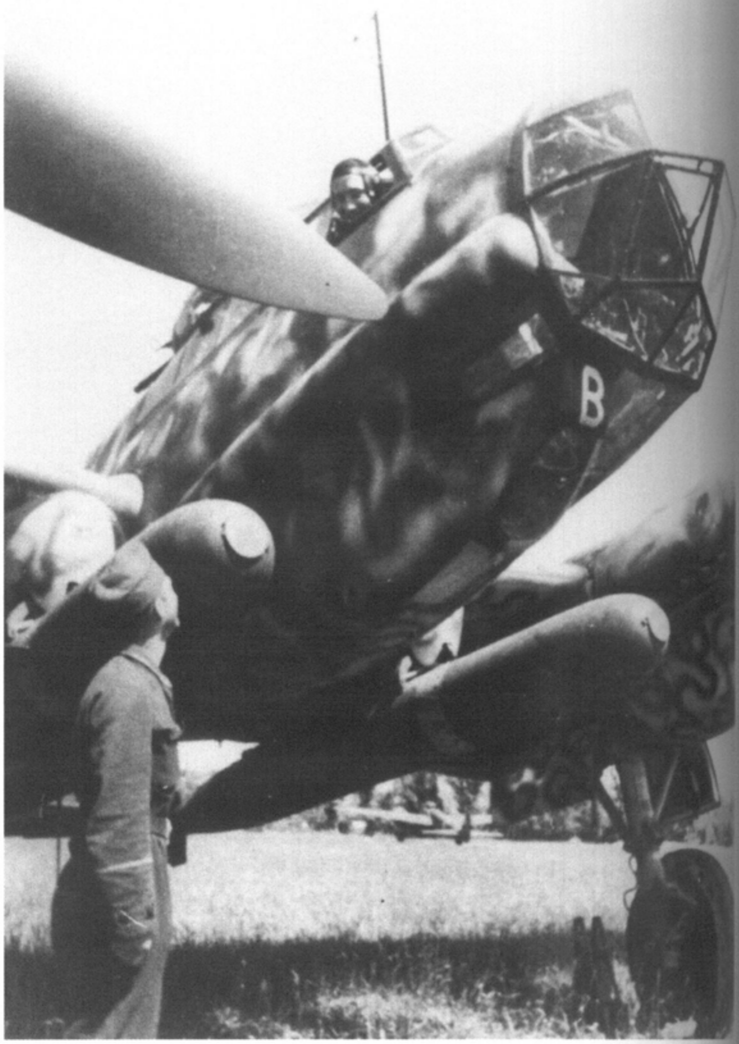
ABOVE: From left to right, Lt Kurt Becker, F. Franke and Ogef. Skupsch of 2./KG 77 share a cigarette before an operation at 11.30 hours at La Jasse in the Spring of 1944. Their Ju 88 A-17 is in the background. All three wear the kapok-filled Schwimmweste 10-76 B-1 life vest and Becker is wearing a Flieger-Netzkopfhaube LKp N 101 flight helmet.

Anti-shipping operations commenced on the night of 6 June with III./KG 26 and II./KG 77 flying from their bases in southern France. *Oblt Kurt* Becker of 2./KG 77 notes that they took off from La Jasse at 1909 hours, landed at Cognac, and then flew to Saumur where they were refuelled and launched their attack against shipping in the Channel, then flying back to Cognac and landing back at La Jasse at 0740 hours, nearly 13 hours after they started the mission: even then, the attack was judged not to have been a success. Adding to the failure, 3./KG 77 had lost a Junkers 88 A-17 flown by *Lt* Hans-Werner Grosse earlier that day 50 kms south of Marseilles while looking for a possible invasion fleet in the Mediterranean. Additionally *Ofw* Anton Günther and his crew were shot down by the 12th SS Panzer Division near Angers; he and his crew were all killed.

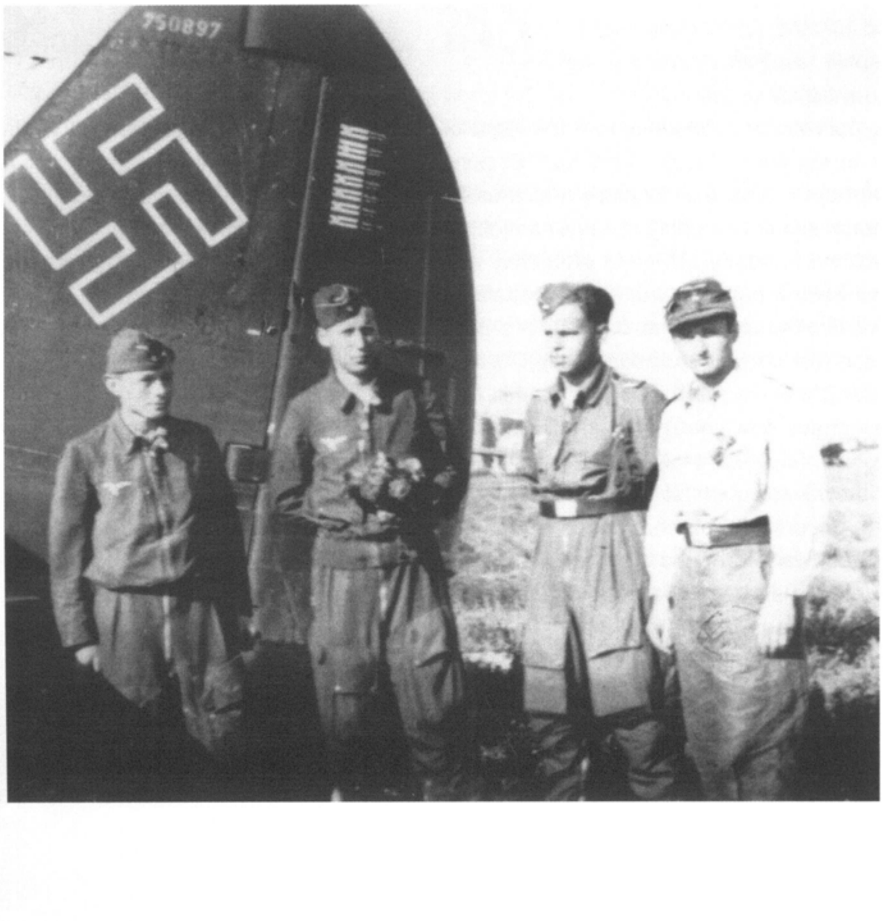
With so much chaos now ensuing, it is difficult to assess the impact of anti-shipping operations and the units involved. Post-war analysis states that just five ships were sunk by air attacks during the first 10 days of the Invasion whilst mines accounted for nine war ships and 17 auxiliary ships or merchantmen. It is understandable that mines were more successful as for June and July 1944 it was assessed that the *Luftwaffe* dropped over 4,400 mines. For the period up to 1 July 1944, 954 mining sorties and 384 torpedo sorties were flown by *Luftflotte* 3 aircraft whilst for the period 1-31 July, over 2,500 mine-laying, 171 torpedo and nearly 80 guided bomb sorties were flown.

It has been estimated that because of overwhelming Allied air superiority, only one torpedo operation was flown per week and this is supported by the logbook entries of *Oblt* Kurt Becker of 3./KG 77 who flew missions on the nights of 6, 14, 22 June, 4 July and 6 August. This too is supported by the *LT* unit losses, II./KG 26, which had only recently converted to the Junkers 88 in the *LT* role, and had only arrived at Montpellier in southern France on 10 June 1944, reported losses on 18 and

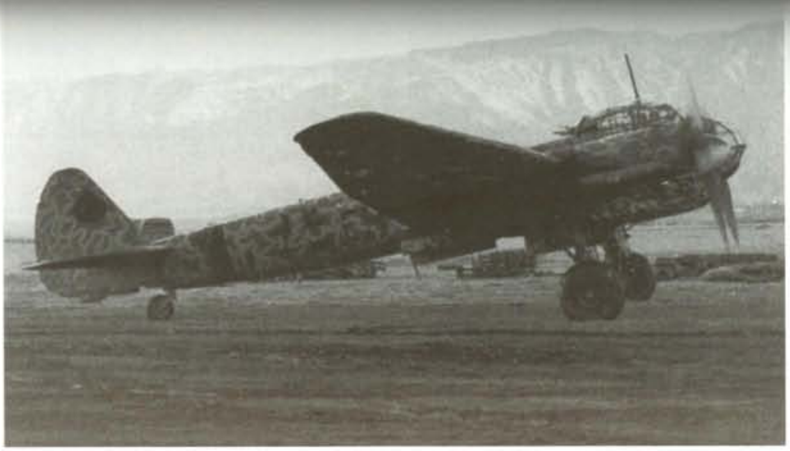




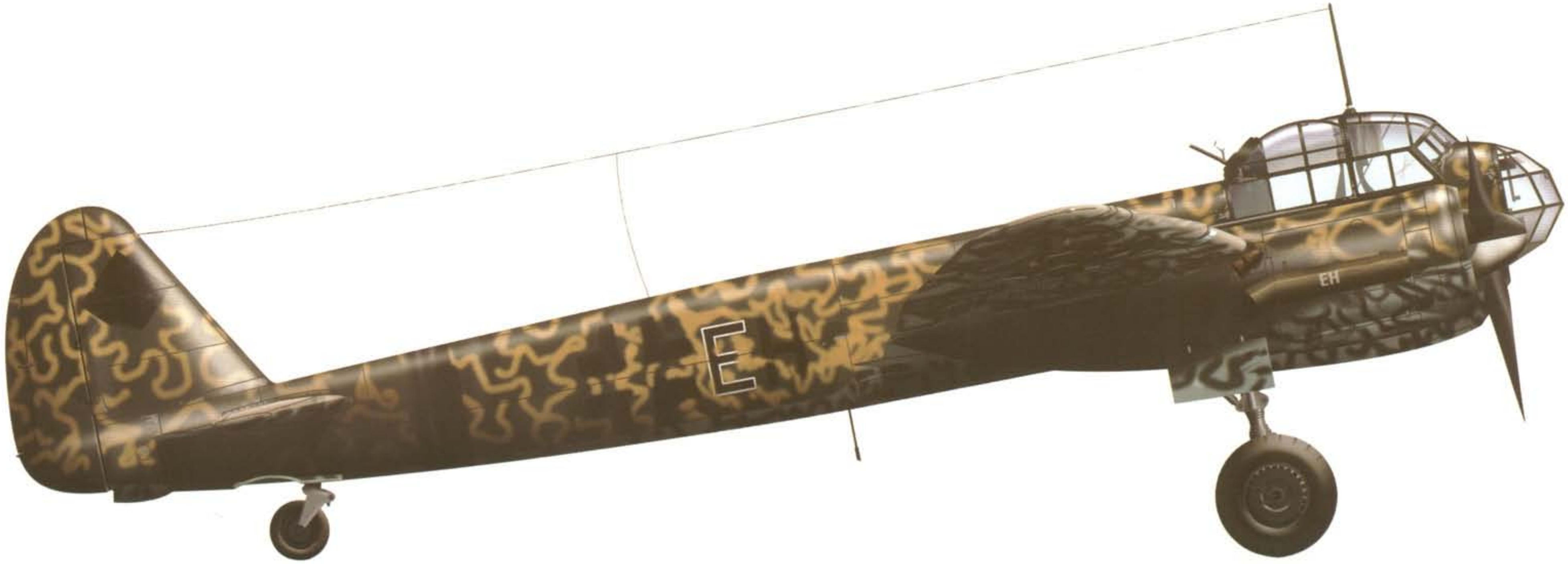
RIGHT:
Lt Knud Gmelin (second left) of 2./ZG 1 was another successful pilot but was shot down and killed in this Ju 88 R-2, W.Nr. 750897, coded 2N+ZH on 9 June 1944. Note the damage to the tail fin.



ABOVE AND ABOVE LEFT:
A Ju 88 A-17 of I./KG 77 at La Jasse in May 1944 about to depart on operations. Like many aircraft operated by KG 77 used in torpedo missions, this machine was camouflaged in a similar manner to the aircraft on page 172. The patterns applied were left in the hands of the ground crew, which is the reason why there was such diversity in the final finish on many Ju 88s of this unit. Note the individual aircraft letter 'B' is painted on the front of the gondola.



LEFT: In contrast to the high quality paintwork shown on the Ju 88 A-4 on page 138, this machine has been the subject of some very hurried and haphazard repainting. The side and uppersurfaces a have been oversprayed with RLM 79 sand-yellow in the 'Arabesken' pattern over the original camouflage pattern of RLM 70/71. However it appears that in order to stop the reflection of the white areas of the national markings during night operations or bright sunlight, these have been crudely oversprayed with black paint. In addition the whole underside of the aircraft also appears to have been sprayed with black paint with some areas not being completely covered, allowing some patches of RLM 65 to show through.



Junkers Ju 88 A-4 of 1./KG 77 with visible code 'EH'

The complete code of this aircraft should be 3Z+EH, but in common with many aircraft of this unit, the unit code has been painted out leaving just the Staffel letter 'H' and individual aircraft letter 'E' in black, with the latter being thinly outlined in white. These two letters were also applied on the flame damper of the Junkers Jumo 211 engine. The spinner appears to have been half-sprayed in the white Staffel colour without any masking being used leaving a horizontal soft demarcation line.

ABOVE:
The very experienced Major Willi Sölter, Kommandeur I./KG 77 and I./KG 26. He flew operationally for most of the war, being awarded the Deutsches Kreuz in Gold in December 1941 whilst with I./KG 77 and the Ritterkreuz in August 1944.

22 June, 6, 26 and 31 July whilst III./KG 26 reported losses on 6, 12, 13, 18, 22 June and 4, 11, 17, 26 July.[4]

In addition to torpedo, mining and conventional attacks, Hs 293 and *Fritz X* missions were also being flown at night by Heinkel 177s of I. and II./KG 40 and Dornier 217s of III./KG 100. Seven ships were claimed to have been sunk and five damaged in the period 8 June to 15 August 1944. The most notable sinkings were the frigate HMS *Lawford* off Juno Beach on 8 June and the destroyer *Boadicea* 12 miles off Portland Bill on 13 June; both were credited to III./KG 100 and the latter ship exploded, killing all but 12 of its crew. However, yet again losses would be high. I./KG 40 flew three attacks over the beaches and lost in the region of ten Heinkel 177s between 7 June and 5 July whilst II. Gruppe, the more experienced Hs 293 unit, lost in the region of 20 in the same period; both units were then withdrawn from the front line, both *Gruppen* effectively disbanding from October 1944 onwards.

What it was like flying the Heinkel 177 over Normandy is best shown by the experiences of *Ofw* Werner Neuenfeld and his crew from 4./KG 40. They arrived with KG 40 on 19 February 1944 at Bordeaux-Merignac and then undertook Hs 293 training at Peenemünde in northern Germany. Their first operational flight was over the Normandy Beaches at the start of the Invasion, by which stage II./KG 40 was flying from Toulouse, much further away from Allied intruder aircraft. On their third flight on the night of 12 June 1944, they were shot down by a Mosquito of 410 Squadron before they could launch their Hs 293; all baled out without injury over German lines but they did not fly their next and final mission until 4 July 1944, the last night that the Heinkel 177 was destined to fly over the Normandy Beaches. This time they had to take evasive action when they detected a night fighter, only for the pilot to become disorientated and the mission aborted. Four days later, the decision was made to withdraw II./KG 40 to Norway because of unsustainable losses and *Ofw* Neuenfeld was briefed to take one of the last remaining serviceable Heinkel 177s back to Germany. The 0600 hrs take-off was delayed due to the presence of Allied aircraft but three hours later, they were airborne, together with two ground crew who were returning to Germany on leave, and flew north-east at low level:

ABOVE:
Oberst Werner Klumper, Kommodore of KG 26 from March 1943 to November 1944. Klumper was an experienced anti-shipping officer, having flown seaplanes before and at the start of the war with 3./906 before transferring to KG 30. He then became Kommandeur of I./KSG 2 before becoming Kommandeur of I./KG 26 in July 1942. He was awarded the Deutsches Kreuz in Gold in October 1942 and the Ritterkreuz in August 1943.

> *"After about an hour, an unknown aircraft was spotted to the right and ahead of us. The* Bordfunker *then made out some more, 16 all together, and these were identified as P-38 Lightnings. When the fighters turned in to attack,* Ofw *Neuenfeld pulled the Heinkel 177 into a layer of cloud but after 10 minutes, we flew into a gap and the P-38s were waiting for us and attacked without hesitation. A burst of fire hit the fuselage tank and fuel squirts into the cockpit where everything bursts into flames. The* Bordmechaniker *tried to jettison the escape hatch but it was stuck. Only when the* Bordfunker *and* Beobachter *together jump on it does the hatch come off and they, followed by the pilot and the* Bordmechaniker*, bale out. In the rear fuselage with an extra escape hatch, the other ground crew hesitated and was later found dead next to the wreckage. Despite being at 400 metres altitude, the rear gunner, mid-upper gunner and the other ground crew are able to escape and bale out..."*

BELOW:
I./KG 26 Bardufoss, winter 1944. Only one of these pilots would survive the mounting losses incurred by the anti-shipping units - (left to right) Lt Günther Breu (killed 10 February 1945), Lt Walter Anders and Lt Ernst Wiskett (killed 12 February 1945).

The experienced 6. and III./KG 100[5] suffered just as badly, losing in the region of 30 Dornier 217s up to the middle of August 1944, after which, they were withdrawn from the battle.

Meanwhile, the Allied landing in southern France on 15 August 1944 had seen sporadic attacks by III./KG 26, KG 77 having been disbanded and I./KG 77 absorbed into a new I./KG 26 under *Maj* Willi Sölter, the experienced former *Kommandeur* of I./KG 77. With nowhere left to run, five days later the last of the *Luftwaffe's* specialist anti-shipping units headed for Germany.

By September 1944, very little now remained of the *Luftwaffe's* anti-shipping force. The training unit KG 101 had been disbanded in

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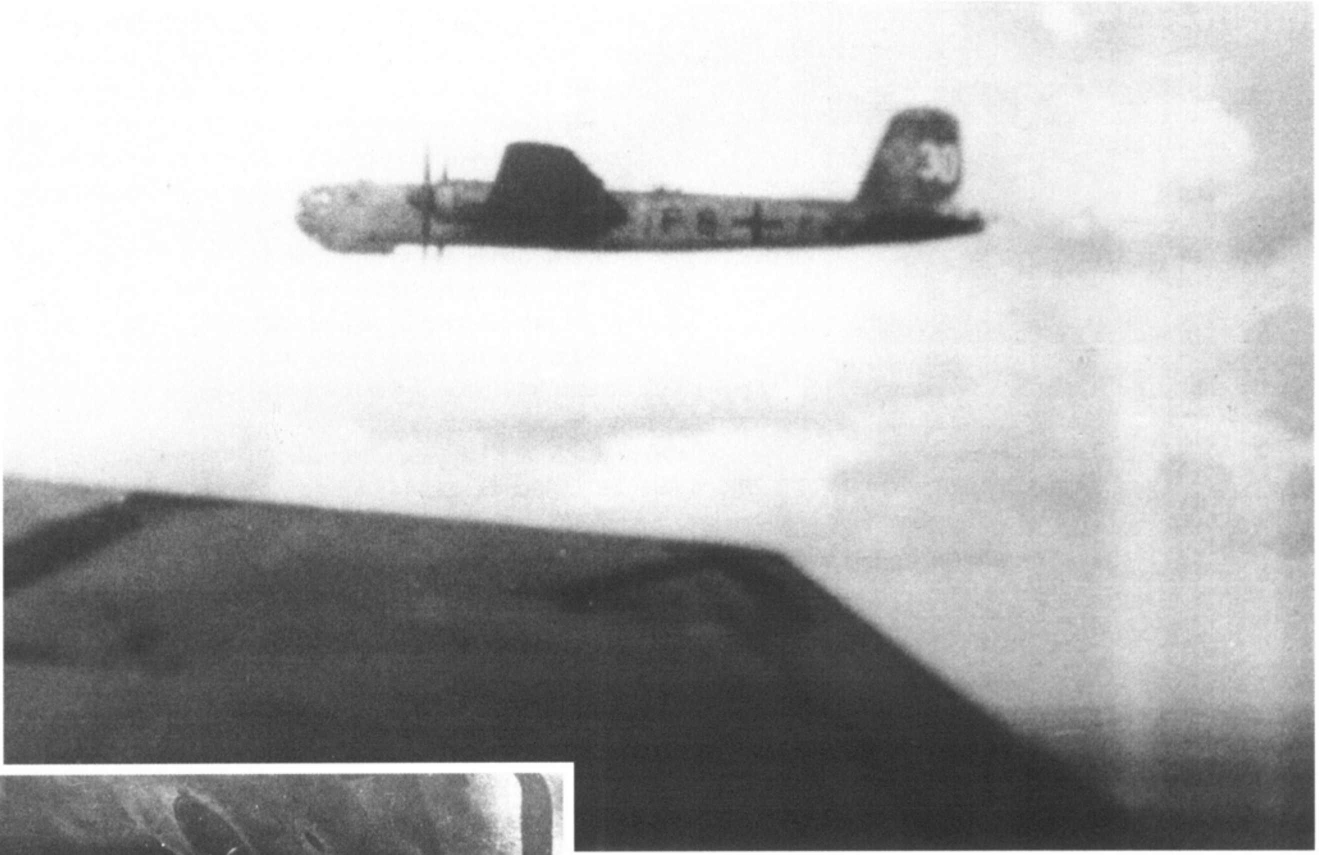
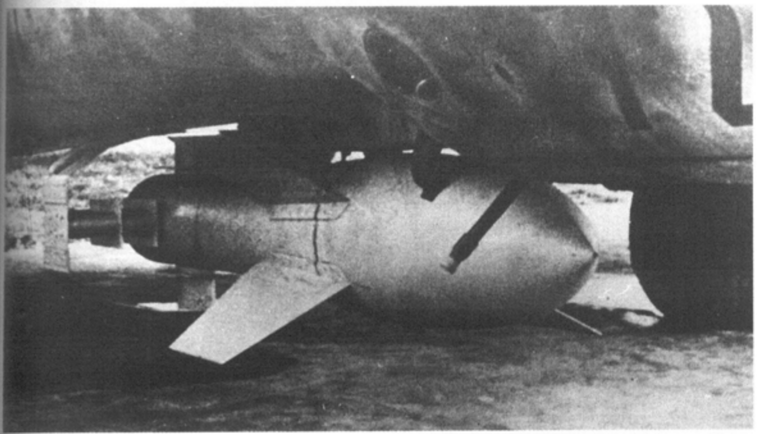
[4] I./KG 26 was still converting to the Junkers 88 and would only lose one aircraft over the Normandy beaches on 17 August 1944.

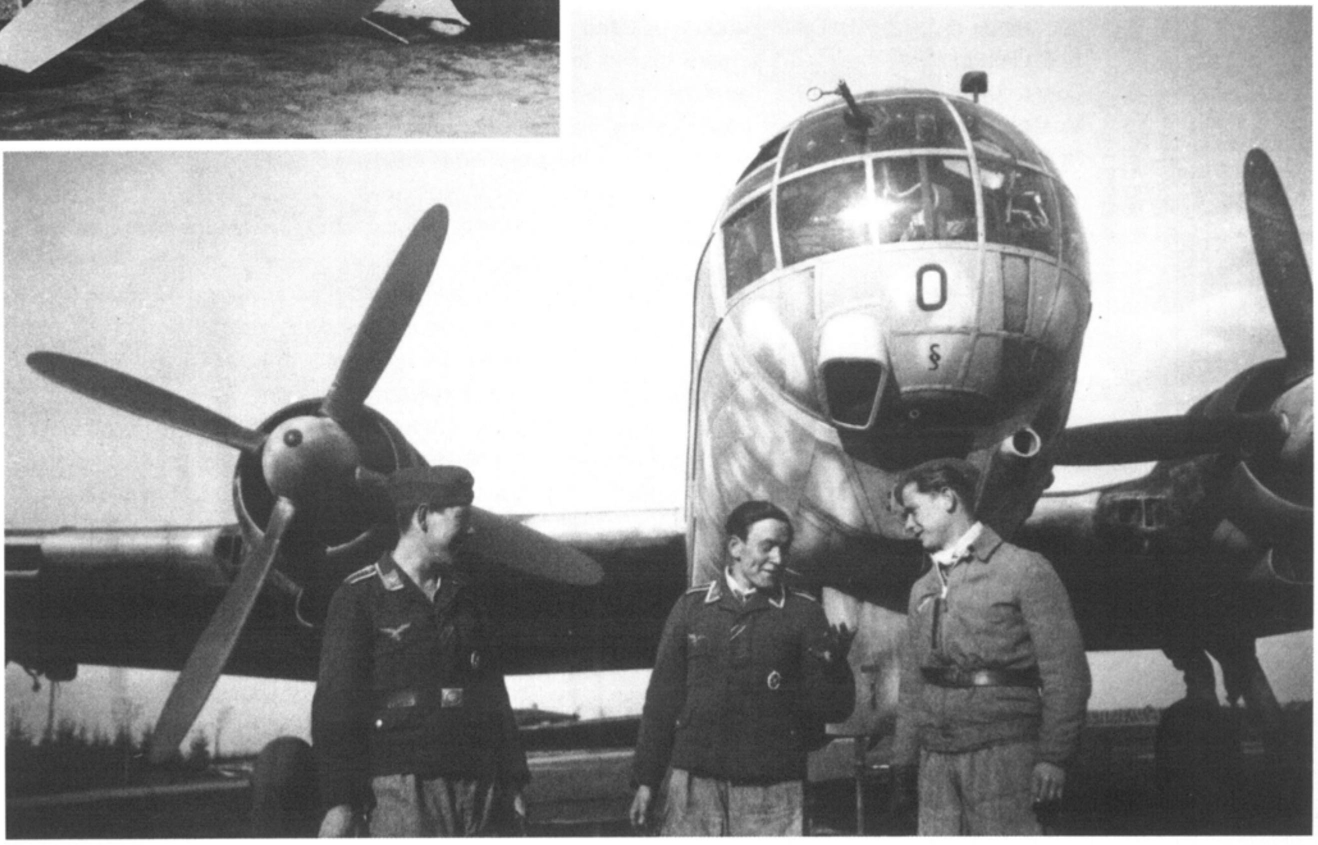
[5] 6./KG 100 operated as part of 8./KG 100.



RIGHT:
A He 177 A of KG 40 on a training flight, 1944. Note the oversized numeral on the rudder.



LEFT: The Fritz-X radio-guided armour piercing bomb, weighing 1,400 kg, pictured mounted on the fuselage bomb rack of a He 177. Released from altitudes around 6,100 metres, the unpowered weapon achieved an impact velocity close to the speed of sound, enabling it to penetrate the deck armour of a heavy cruiser or battleship.



RIGHT:
A He 177 A of 1./KG 40. Note the Lotfe bomb sight, rear view mirror, 7.9 mm machine gun and the aircraft's individual letter 'O'. The significance of the badge on the nose is not known. From left to right: Uffz Helmut Hoffmann (POW 11 June 1944), Uffz Willi Scholz (POW 11 June 1944) and Ogefr Walter Heibel (killed 11 June 1944).

ABOVE: The scene at Bardufoss after the lucky crews from I./KG 26 returned on 20 February 1945. Left to right: Obstlt Wilhelm Stemmler, Kommodore KG 26, Oberst Ernst Köhl, 5 Flieger Division, Uffz Denk, Major Willi Sölter, Kommandeur I./KG 26

August 1944 and any training was now carried out by *Erg.* KG*r LT*, formed from IV./KG 26 and IV./KG 77 and commanded by the former Kü.Fl.Gr 606 pilot *Maj* Peter Schoor; this unit would eventually disband in early 1945. KG 26 was now commanded by *Obstlt* Werner Klümper, I./KG 26 commanded by *Maj* Willi Sölter, II. *Gruppe* by *Maj* Otto Werner and III. *Gruppe* by *Maj* Ernst Thomsen. Still in Germany, in September and October, *Stab* and I *Gruppe* moved to Bardufoss in Norway. II. *Gruppe* moved to Banak and then to Trondheim where it was joined by III./KG 26 after it had converted to the Junkers 188.

On paper, the anti-shipping force was still potent but a lack of fuel, experienced crews, poor serviceability and poor intelligence meant that its effectiveness was hamstrung. Sporadic attacks took place in October and November 1944 but loss reports and records from this time are scarce so what occurred is hard to ascertain. However, despite the presence of KG 26 and U-boats, effective Allied defences meant that convoy JW 29 in October 1944 arrived unscathed, this month being the first that no merchant ships had been lost in the Atlantic since the start of the war. The story was the same for November 1944: convoys RA 61, RA 61A and JW 62 arrived with no losses. More effort was expended against RA 62 in December but yet again, it was a nugatory effort.

1945 would see little attempt to attack convoys until JW 64 which still managed to arrive in Russia on 13 February having lost one ship to a U-boat. KG 26 claimed to have hit a number of ships but it would appear what the attacking crews had observed were premature exploding torpedoes. The series of attacks between 6 and 11 February 1945 cost in the region of 22 aircraft and their crews, including most of 6 *Staffel* together with its *Staffel Kapitän Oblt* Rudolf Rügner;[6] the *Geschwader* could never sustain such losses. There was one more success, the sinking of the *Henry Bacon* on 23 February 1945, the only loss from convoy RA 64, but this was the last success for the *Luftwaffe's* anti-shipping aircraft for World War Two and in any event the attacks had cost two Junkers 88s from II. Gruppe and three Junkers 188s from III. Gruppe.

ABOVE: Left to right: Major Willi Sölter, Kommandeur of I./KG 26, Major Heinrich Ehrler, Kommodore of JG 5 and Major Schöfer, at Bardufoss in April 1945.

The final action and the death knell of KG 26, and with it the *Luftwaffe's* anti-shipping force, came on the evening of 21 April 1945 when a mix of 18 Junkers 88s and Junkers 188s from II./KG 26, apparently led by *Oblt* Fritz Dombrewski, and III./KG 26 led by the *Staffel Kapitän* of 7 *Staffel*, *Hptm* Friedrich-Wilhelm Gehring, were tasked to carry out an armed reconnaissance of the Scottish Coast. Unfortunately for the Germans, an Armed Rover of 37 Mosquitos with an escort of four Mustangs from 333 Squadron was returning from an uneventful patrol of the Kattegat and Denmark. Flt Sgt John Gallagher of 248 Squadron remembers well what happened next:

BELOW: Major Willi Sölter, Kommandeur I./KG 26 and Oblt Joachim Roters, Adjutant I./KG 26.

> *"The Baltic was empty, at least of any reasonable target, and we were returning somewhat disappointed. After crossing the enemy coast and in fact approaching the Scottish coast, someone to the portside of the wing saw enemy aircraft. Our Squadron was flying in the middle of the Strike Force and my pilot thought the aircraft to the south-east of us might have been a Polish Mustang escort until I informed him that I had logged the escort departing north-west to Peterhead some 15 minutes before.*
>
> *"In the meantime, I heard a very cool and distinct voice of Wg Cdr Foxley-Norris, the Strike Force commander, saying 'if you see German aircraft, shoot them down'. Half the formation streamed after the enemy aircraft whilst the other half*

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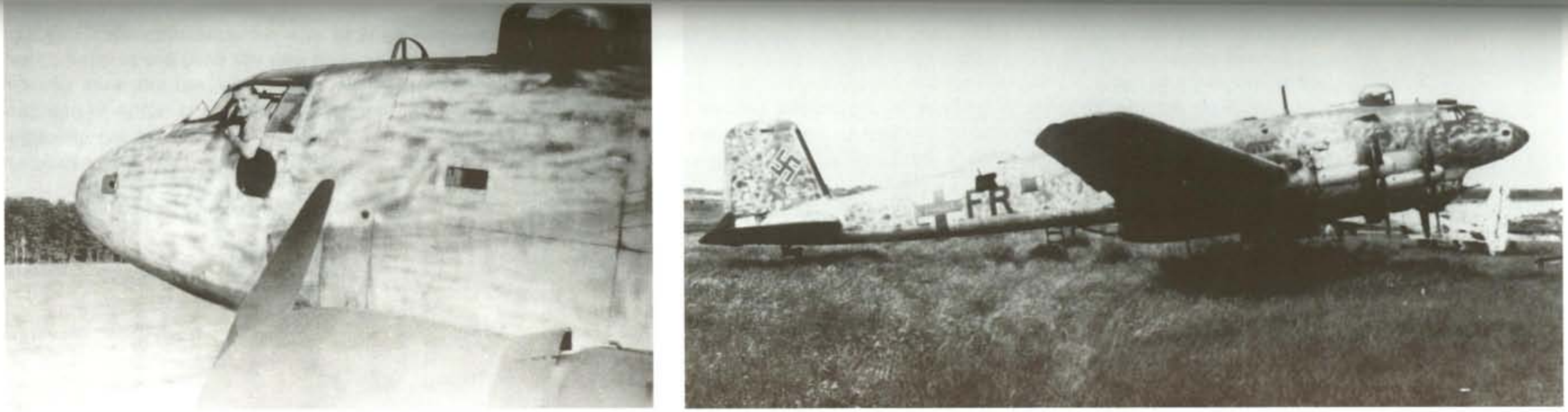
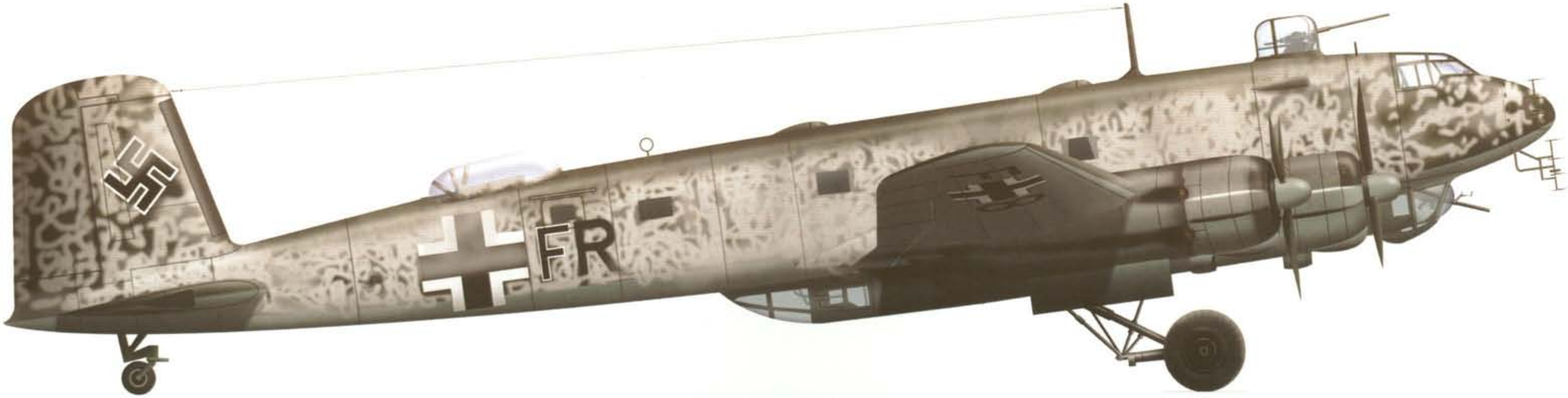
[6] The reconnaissance unit 1(F)/120 also lost two Junkers 88 D-1s whilst shadowing this convoy.

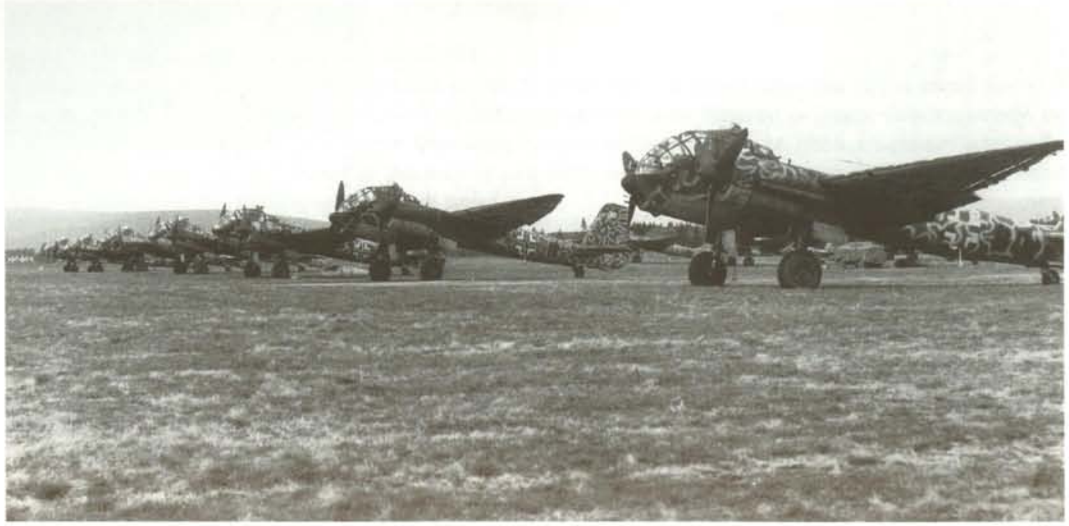


ABOVE: This Fw 200 C-8 was found abandoned in Norway at the end of the war. It carried the code F8+FR. The aircraft originally had been painted in the factory camouflage pattern of RLM 72/73 on the uppersurfaces with RLM 65 underneath. During the winter of 1944/45, snow camouflage had been crudely applied by spraying temporary thin white paint over the aircraft upper and side surfaces. The intensity of the spray application is clearly seen in the photograph of the close-up of the cockpit.

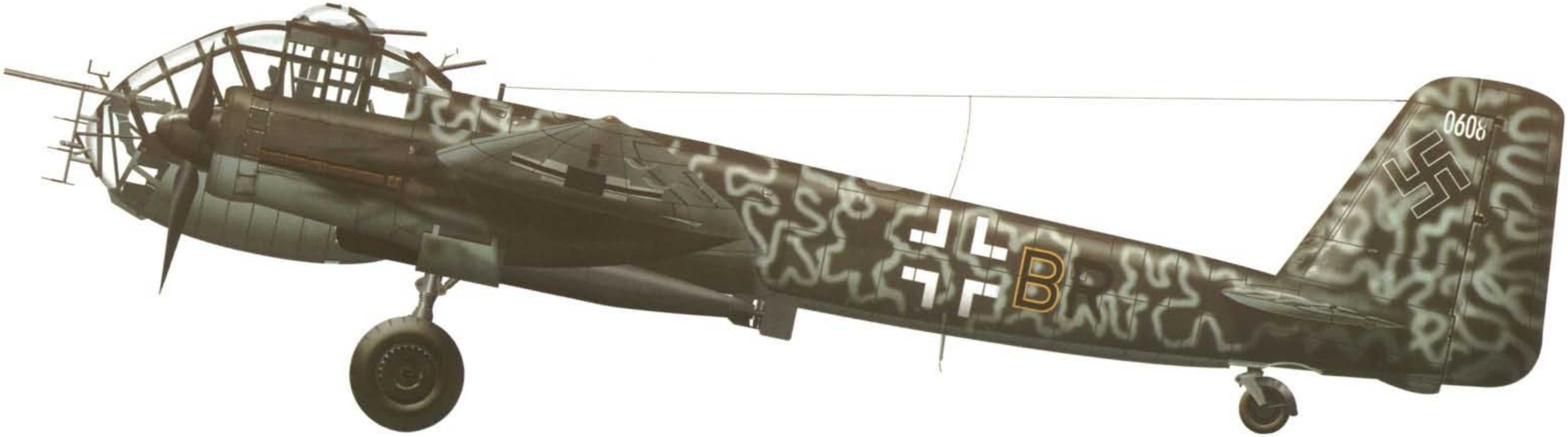


Focke Wulf Fw 200 C-8 of 7./KG 40 coded F8+FR

When this aircraft was found by the Allies in Norway, it had been exposed to the external elements for several months. This would account for the severe weathering of the white paintwork, which especially on the uppersurfaces, was beginning to show the original camouflage underneath. The unit code F8 in front of the Balkenkreuz was painted in black approximately one-sixth of the standard letter height. The Staffel letter 'R' and individual aircraft letter 'F' were also in black with the latter being thinly outlined in white. Some trouble had been taken to paint around the national markings.



LEFT: Seen here are at least nine Ju 188 A-3s lined up at the airfield at Gardemoen in Norway in May 1945. These aircraft had been transferred to III./KG 26 from Aufkl.Gr.(F) 124 before the end of the war with some machines still retaining the original 'G2' unit code. Some of these aircraft were re-coded with the designation '1H' of KG 26 but no evidence of this can be seen in the photograph. The nearest machine was coded G2+BD, a Stab machine of the III. Gruppe, with the next one being G2+BR, W.Nr. 0608, although in both cases the unit code had been painted over. It appears that only the first two aircraft had been fitted with FuG 200 radar on the nose. Note also the FuG 101 radio aerials visible under the wing of the first two aircraft and the drop-tank on the ground under the wing of the third aircraft. The aircraft were later all blown up and destroyed by British troops.



Junkers Ju 188 A-3, W.Nr. 0608, of III./KG 26 coded G2+BR at Gardemoen, Norway May 1945

Although the unit code is not visible, the Staffel letter 'R' and individual aircraft letter 'B' are visible in black with the latter thinly outlined in white. The unit code '1H' had not yet been applied since the aircraft had been transferred from Aufkl.Gr.(F) 124. All the aircraft have had the 'Arabesken' wave pattern applied, probably in RLM 76, in varying intensities. The second and fourth machines in the photograph above have not had their engines sprayed with the wave pattern but all still show the original standard camouflage pattern of 70/71 on the uppersurfaces with RLM 65 underneath. The Werknummer 0608 was painted in large white numbers on the fin.

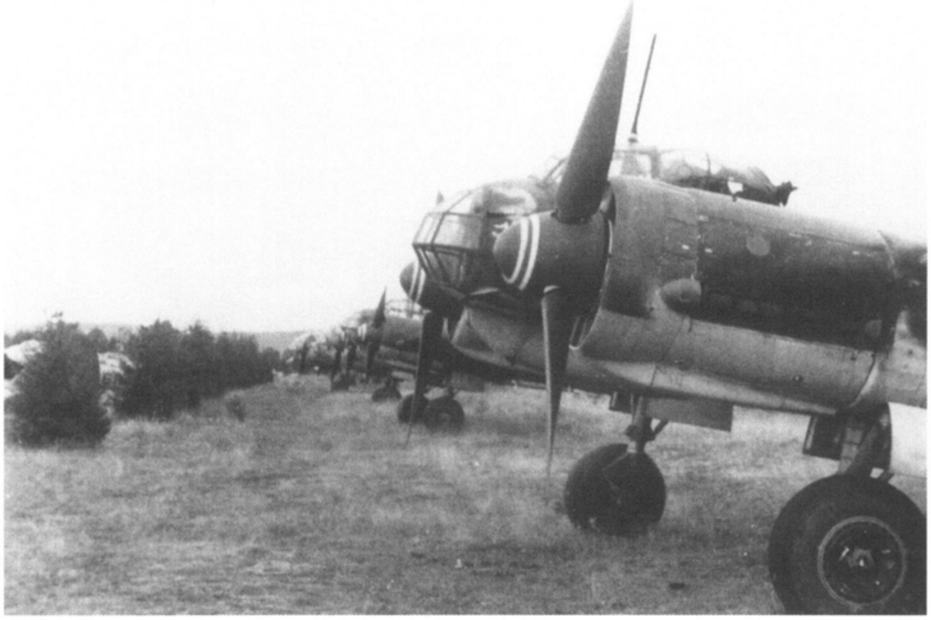
> *continued its course to our base at Banff. In the resulting melée, we attacked two Ju 88s and the other aircraft were also attacking them. I tried to take photos against the 'G' force and warned my pilot of converging Mosquitoes which constituted a greater danger than the Germans. Nine Junkers were shot down with horrific explosions when they hit the water suggesting they carried torpedoes already primed.*
>
> *"The cloud base was low, visibility moderate and we chased a Ju 88 eastwards for some time. I became alarmed at our fuel situation and mentioned to my pilot that we had passed the point of no return. He thought we were on our way to base and that the aircraft he was chasing was a Mosquito. I put him right on this and we eventually reached Peterhead with an emergency landing and out of fuel, one hour late and posted as missing."*

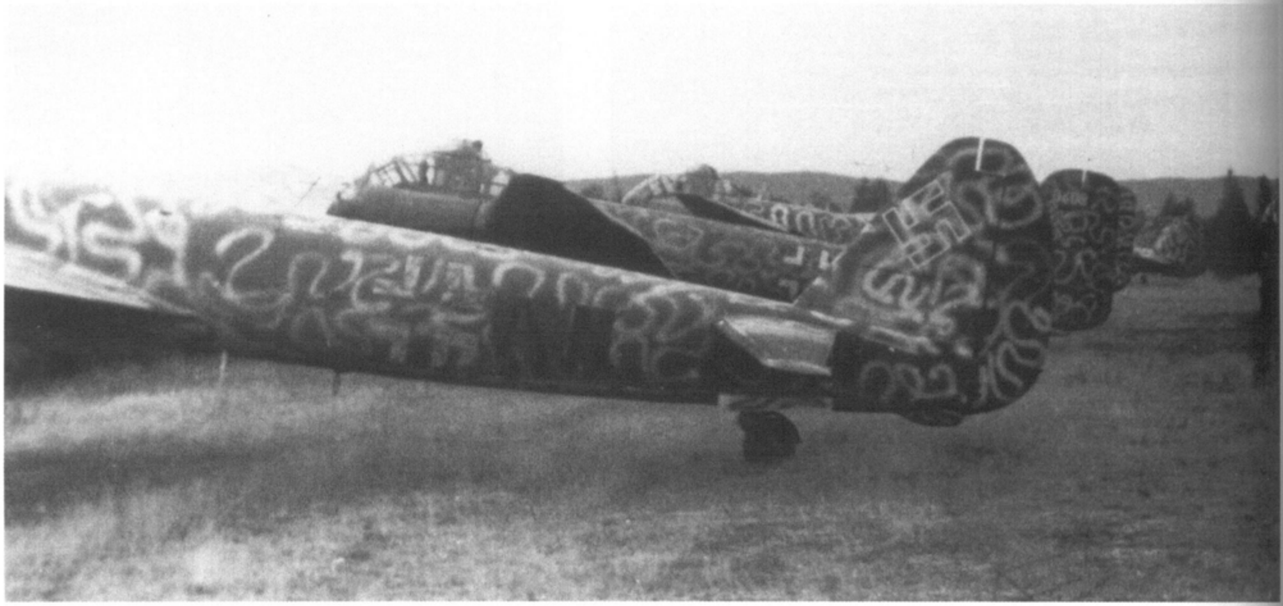
THIS PAGE: Crew members from Ju 88 A-17, coded 1H+VH of 1./KG 26, are happy to be back from a mission, at Bardufoss on 20 February 1945. All appear to be wearing at least the trousers of the K So/41 two-piece flight suit ('Invasion suit') and kapok-filled life vests. Flare cartridges are strapped around the right leg of one of the crew.

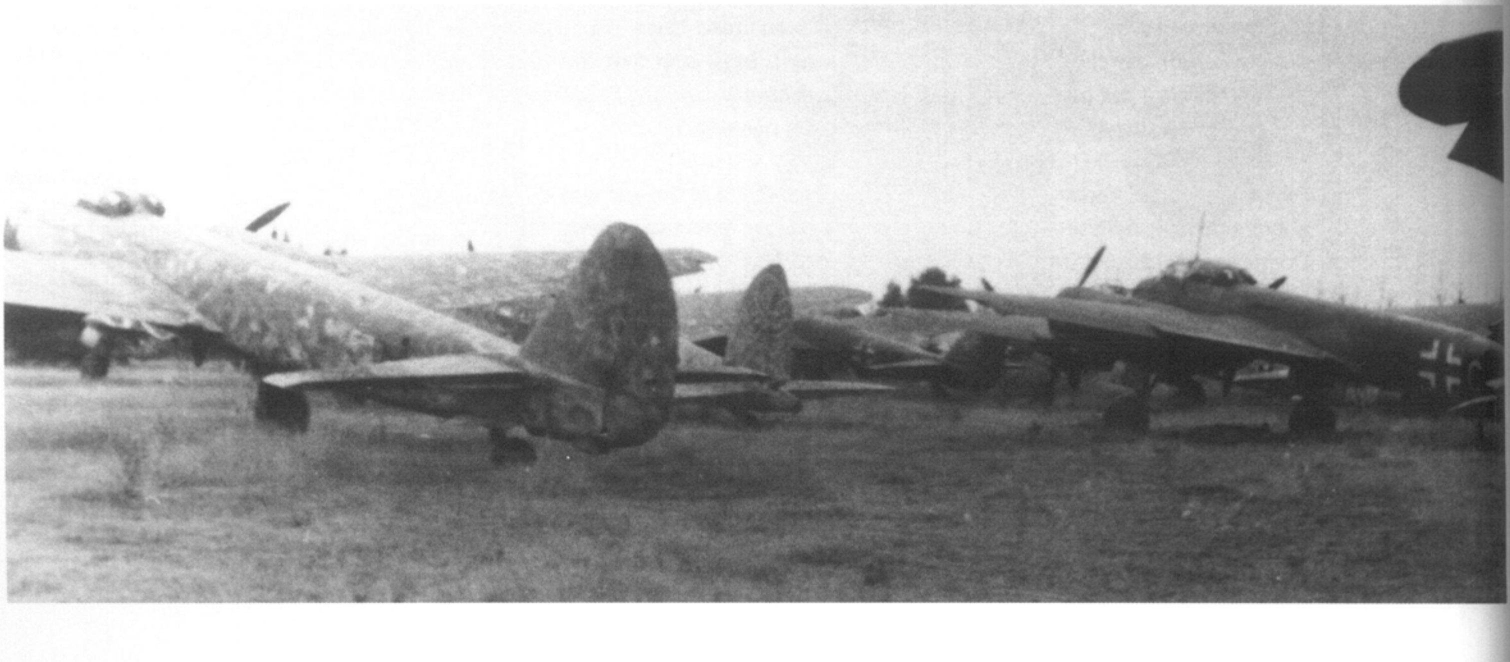
For the Germans, keeping accurate records by this stage of the war was the last thing they were worried about but it is believed that at least seven aircraft and their crews failed to return including *Oblt* Dombrewski, the *Staffel Kapitän* of 6. *Staffel*, *Oblt* Friedrich Ebert and *Ritterkreuz* holder *Ofw* Herbert Kunze of 9. *Staffel*. The RAF claimed eight Junkers 88s and one Junkers 188 destroyed and two aircraft damaged.

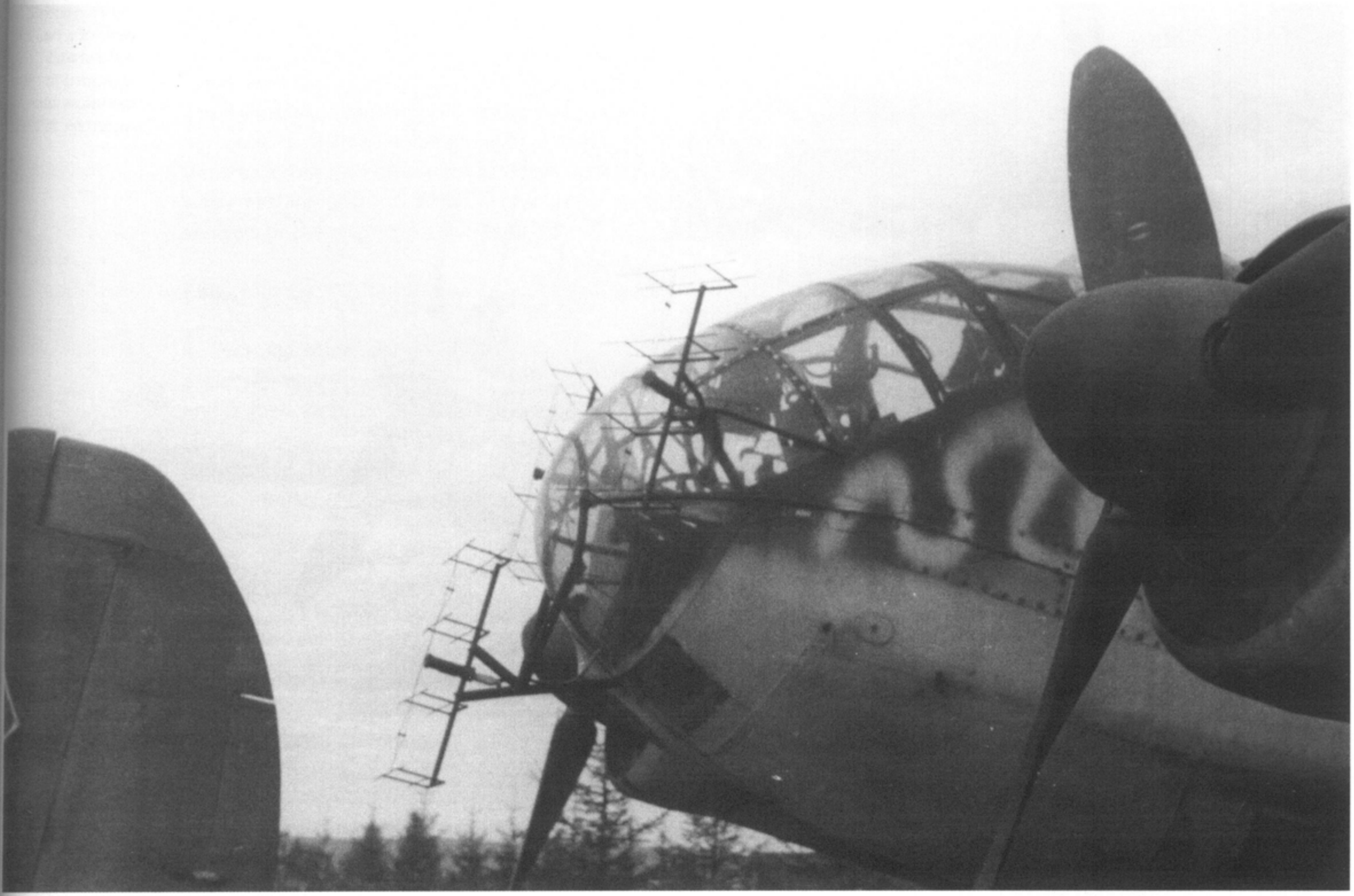
Short of trained crews and serviceable aircraft, all that the Sea Eagles of KG 26 could do was wait for the end which came on 8 May 1945. One crew was already convinced of the end as on 2 May 1945, *Oblt* Rolf Kunze of 9./KG 26, who was also the *Nationalsozialistischen Führungsoffizier* for KG 26 deserted to Scotland, much to the disgust of his fellow aircrew. The *Luftwaffe's* anti-shipping force had started inauspiciously and had developed into a formidable force only to be slaughtered from late 1943 onwards. It therefore ended the war in the same way as it had started and as such, the part it played in the *Luftwaffe's* armoury has been overshadowed and the efforts of those who were lucky enough to survive has to this day generally been forgotten.

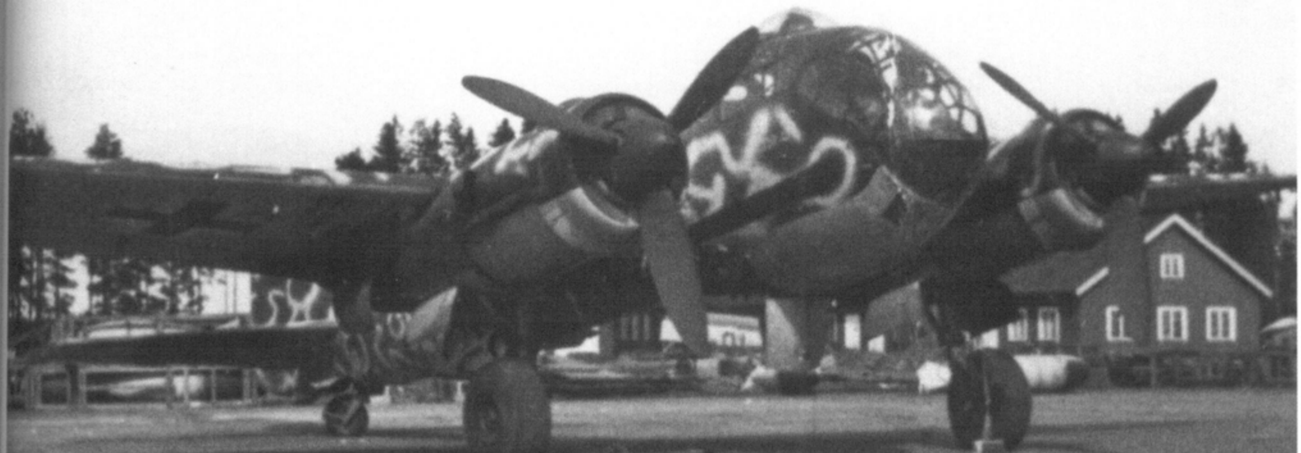
THIS PAGE: These photographs taken after the war show a large number of Ju 88s and Ju 188s that were captured at Bardufoss, which are mostly identified as belonging to KG 26. The nearest Ju 88 in the centre photograph carries the code 1H+AN of the 5. Staffel, which indicates that the individual aircraft letter 'A' would have been red. The Ju 188 behind has the Werknummer 0408 painted in white on the fin and note that its port engine cowling is devoid of any scribble pattern.



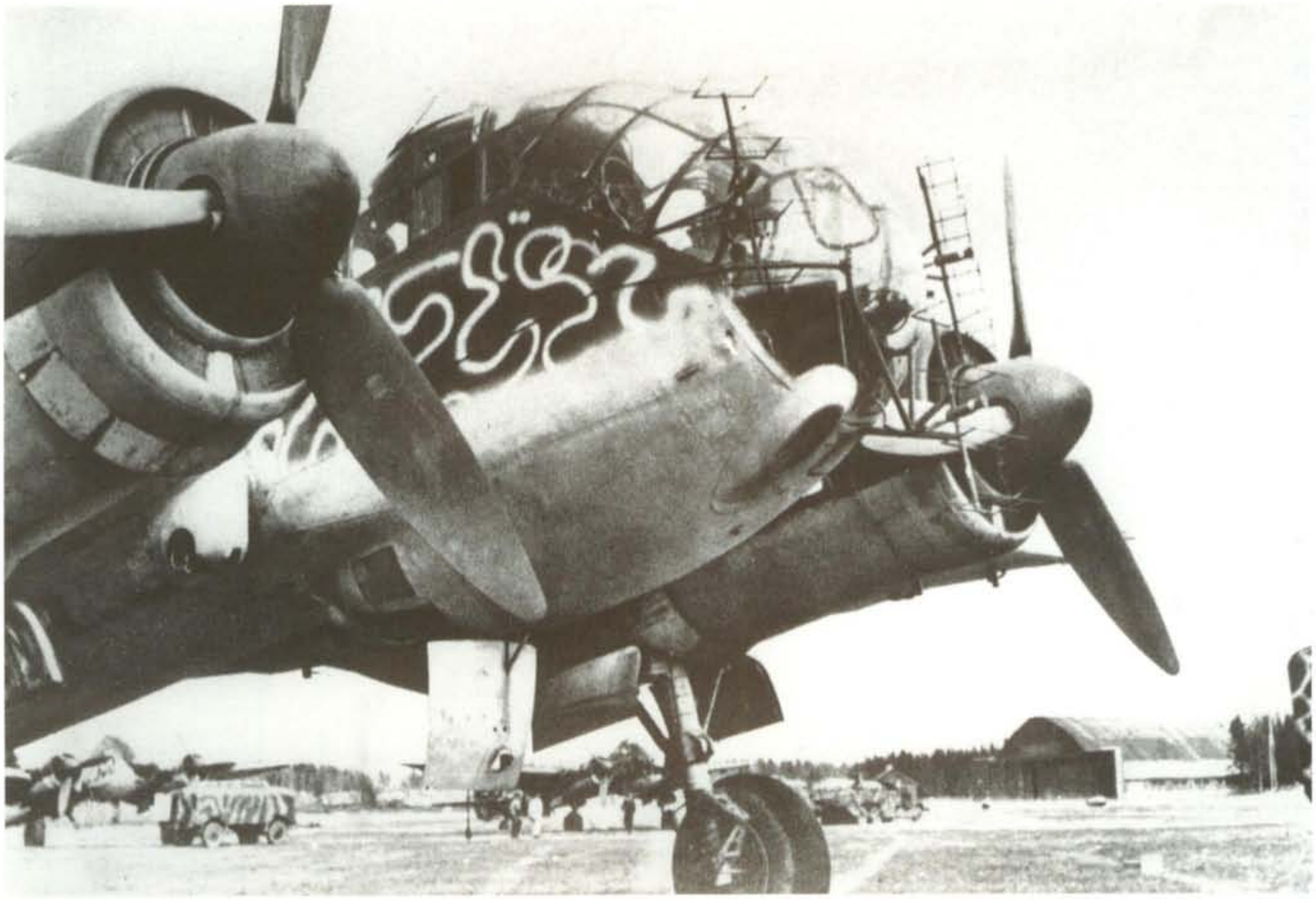






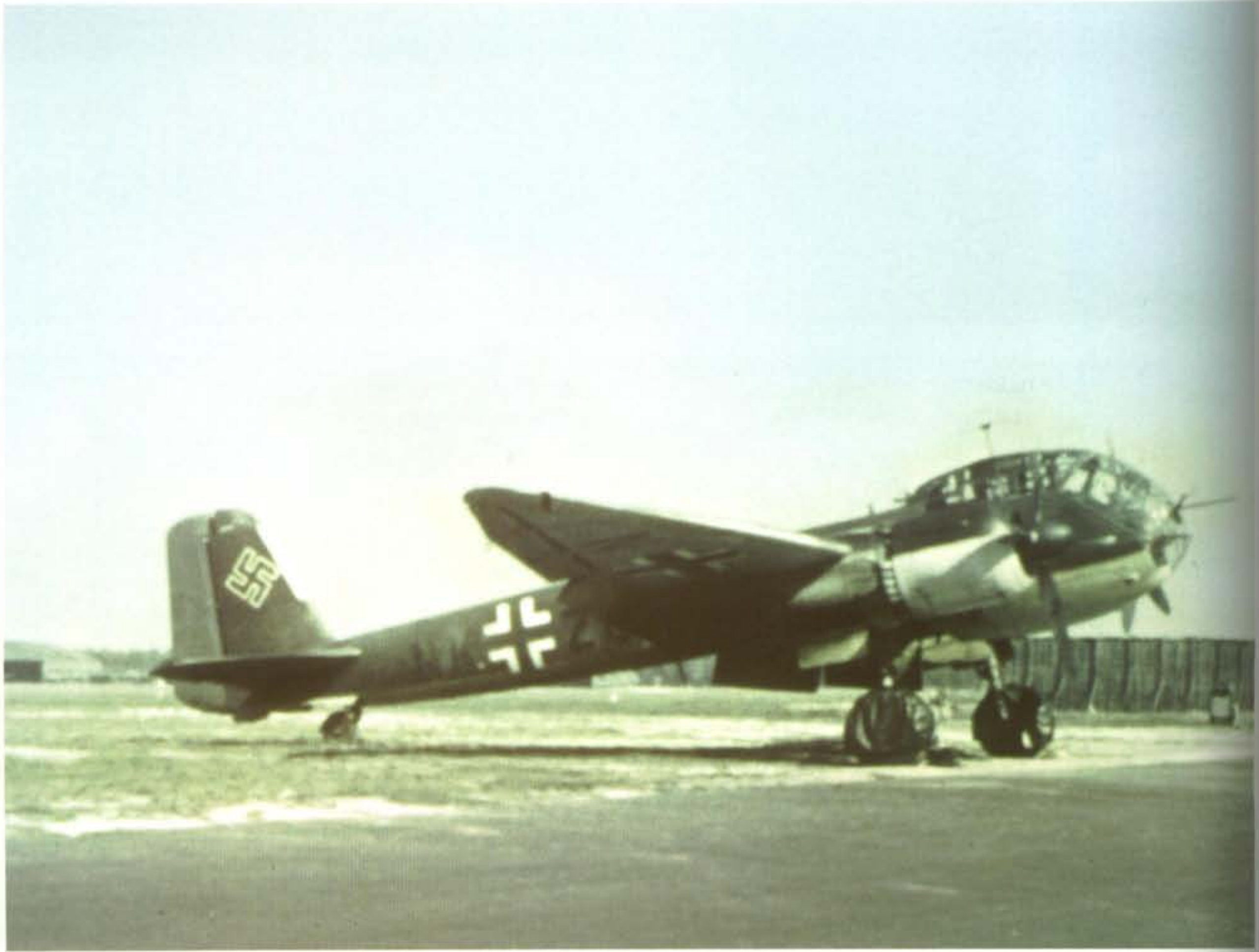


LEFT AND ABOVE: Ju 188s of KG 26 at Bardufoss. The aircraft above carries FuG 200 Hohentwiel ship search radar and the aircraft to the left carries the equipment for adjusting the steering of the torpedoes in flight, as evidenced by the dark bulge running down the starboard side below the cockpit.



LEFT: Another view of a FuG 200 Hohentwiel-equipped Ju 188 at Bardufoss after surrender in 1945.

RIGHT: A rare colour photograph of a Ju 188.



German Air-Launched Torpedoes

There were two standard types of German air-launched torpedoes: the *Luft Torpedo* (LT) F5B and F5W which were used more or less indiscriminately as supplies dictated. Both were powered by compressed air, were 5 metres in length and required a minimum depth of water of 16-20 metres. In both torpedoes, the gyro started to run as it left the aircraft and the engine was started by the pressure of water pushing back on a flap as the torpedo entered the water. The following was a fairly accurate analysis of the major types made by Allied Air Technical Intelligence at the end of July 1942:

F5B

A 750 kg torpedo with an explosive charge of 250 kg and is manufactured at Putzig (Puck) near Gotenhafen (Gdynia). It has a range of 3,000 metres and a speed of 33 knots.

It is considered very satisfactory but has the disadvantage that the whisker-type pistol with which it is fitted does not detonate at very acute ranges. It normally becomes armed after travelling 200-300 metres through the water but this time can be reduced by previous adjustment on the ground.

The air rudder fitted to this torpedo comprises four horizontal planes set in pairs at a slight angle to each other so that the air channel between them tapers. The four planes are joined to each other by a vertical section at each end, the whole forming a cube of about 310 mm (14 inches wide).

The air rudders come away when the torpedo enters the water but remain just long enough to prevent the torpedo from rolling while the engines start up and gather speed.

F5W

The F5W is the Italian Fiume 'Whitehead' torpedo. It has a speed of 36 knots and a slightly longer range than the F5B but has an explosive charge of only 195 kg. Its total weight is about 900 kg.

The F5W is nevertheless considered the better torpedo of the two. Apart from its slightly greater speed and range, it is highly sensitive and even a glancing blow will cause it to explode. It can also be dropped from a greater height than the F5B.

The air rudder of the F5W is of different design to that of the F5B and is much more complicated. It appears to incorporate a form of aileron operated by a shaft coupled to the gyro-drive.

This air rudder is made in part of cork and is very light. When the torpedo enters the water, the air rudder carries away, taking with it the shaft controlling the ailerons.

Unlike the F5B, the F5W has no stabilising fins on the torpedo itself.

LT 350

Several POWs have seen this described variously as a circling, spiral or zig-zag torpedo at Grosseto but had no personal experience of its use.

They were agreed, however, in stating that it would drop by parachute from heights varying between 2,000 and 4,000 metres and that it would be used in busy harbours or amongst large concentrations of shipping.

The LT 350 is stated to be electrically driven and set for a much slower speed than the ordinary torpedo. Its endurance is said to be between two and three hours.

According to POWs, this torpedo is fitted with a self-destruct device which operates automatically when the motor runs down.

The first use of this torpedo was stated to have been against convoys 'Harpoon' and 'Vigorous' on 15 June 1942 and was dropped by the non-specialist I./KG 54.

Experimental German Air-Launched Torpedoes

Blohm und Voss BV L 10 Glider Torpedo Carrier

THIS PAGE: These three drawings are taken from a copy of an original Handbook of the L 10, Werkschrift g.2010, published in October 1944 under the auspices of the Oberkommando der Luftwaffe, Der Chef der Technischen Luftrüstung Fl E 9. The drawing (right) shows the main component parts of the L10 mini-glider fitted with a standard LT F5b torpedo. The idea was to launch the torpedo attached to the L10 from a higher and further distance from a target, which would enable the carrier aircraft to break off an attack at a safer distance. Upon launching the L 10 a small drogue (bottom right) would be reeled out as per the drawing below which upon touching the water, would release the torpedo.

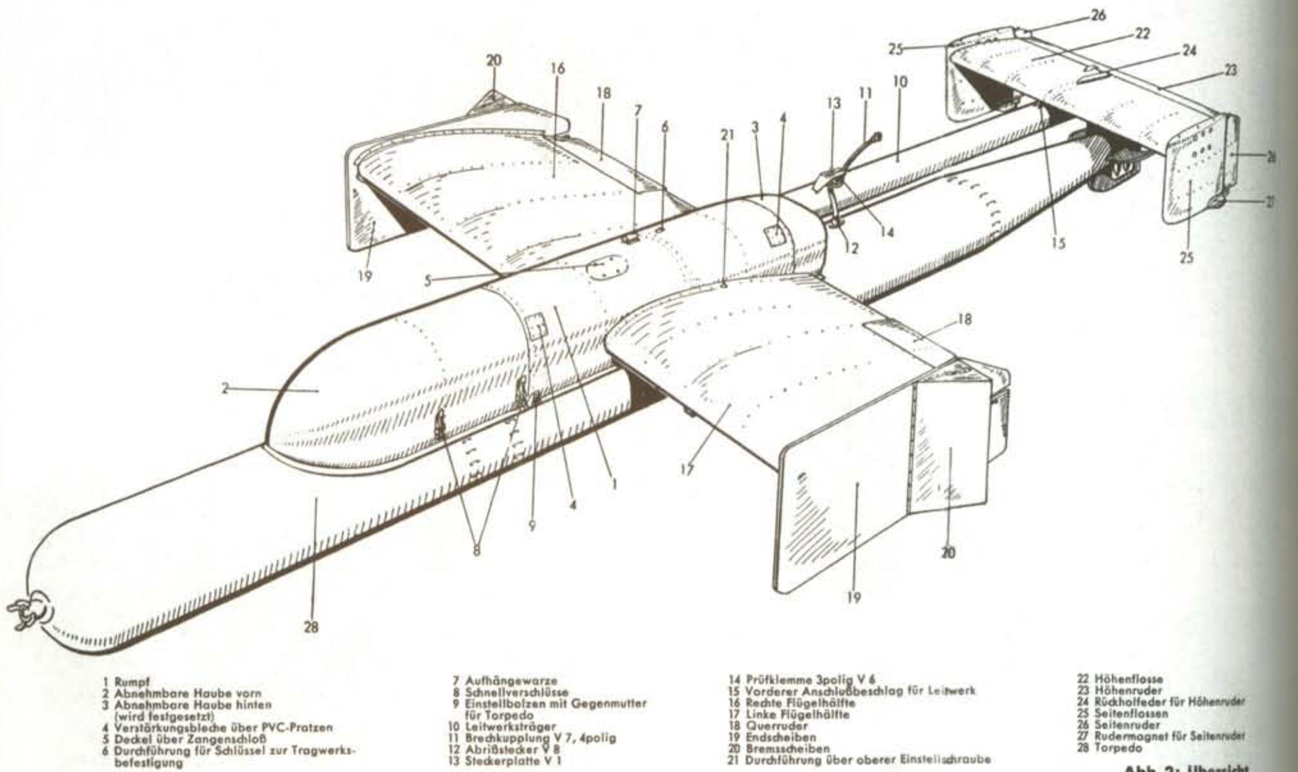
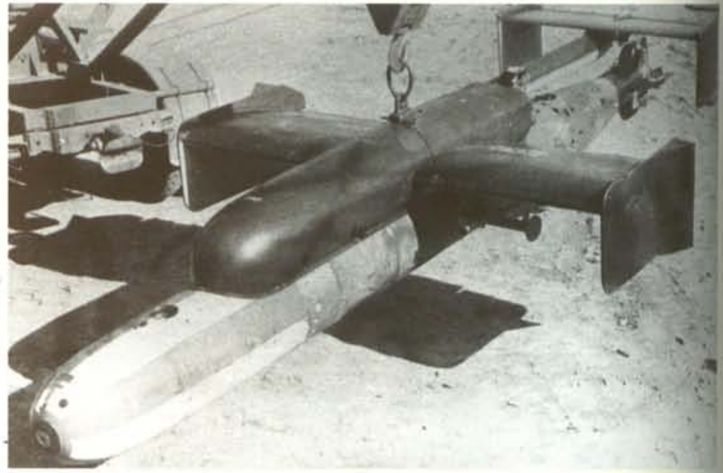

1 Rumpf
2 Abnehmbare Haube vorn
3 Abnehmbare Haube hinten (wird festgesetzt)
4 Verstärkungsbleche über PVC-Pratzen
5 Deckel über Zangenschloß
6 Durchführung für Schlüssel zur Tragwerksbefestigung
7 Aufhängewarze
8 Schnellverschlüsse
9 Einstellbolzen mit Gegenmutter für Torpedo
10 Leitwerksträger
11 Brechkupplung V 7, 4polig
12 Abrißstecker V 8
13 Steckerplatte V 1
14 Prüfklemme 3polig V 6
15 Vorderer Anschlußbeschlag für Leitwerk
16 Rechte Flügelhälfte
17 Linke Flügelhälfte
18 Querruder
19 Endscheiben
20 Bremsscheiben
21 Durchführung über oberer Einstellschraube
22 Höhenflosse
23 Höhenruder
24 Rückholfeder für Höhenruder
25 Seitenflossen
26 Seitenruder
27 Rudermagnet für Seitenruder
28 Torpedo

Abb. 2: Ubersicht

RIGHT: Close-up view of the L 10 fitted with a practice LT F5b torpedo with a dummy warhead. Clearly visible in this photograph is the small torpedo release drogue attached to the underside of the port wing of the L 10.



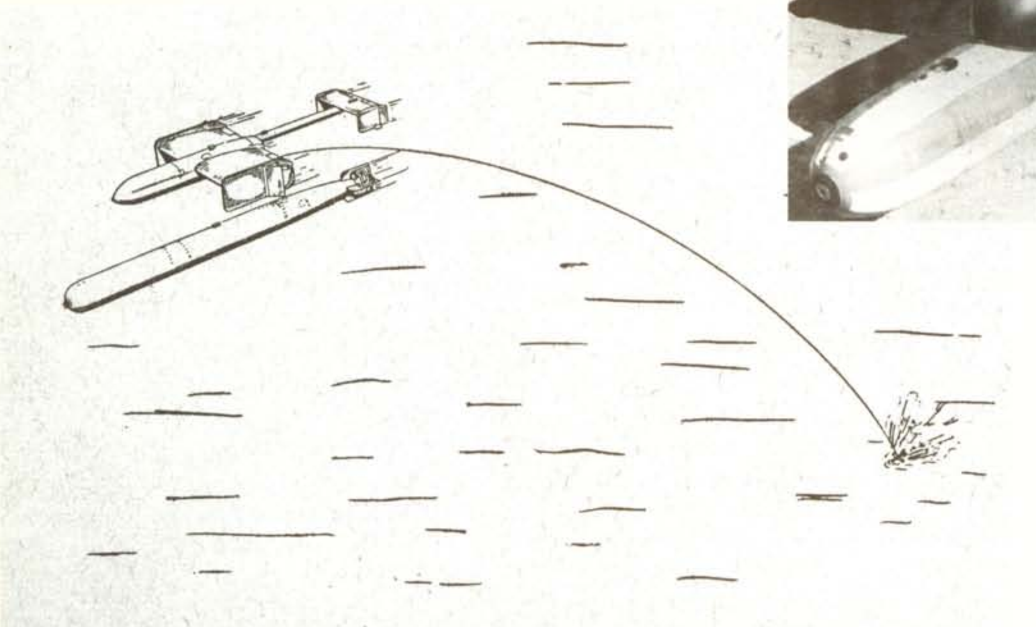


Abb. 1: Lösen des Torpedos

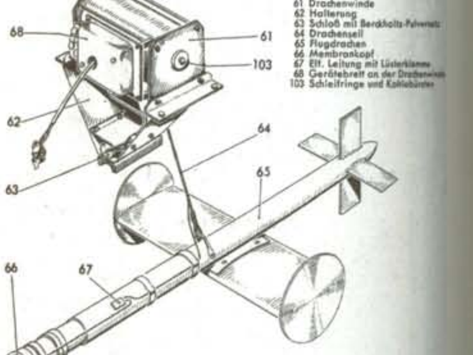
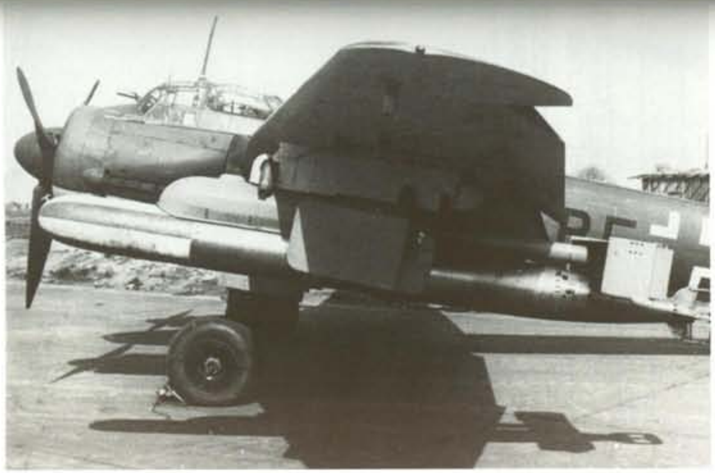
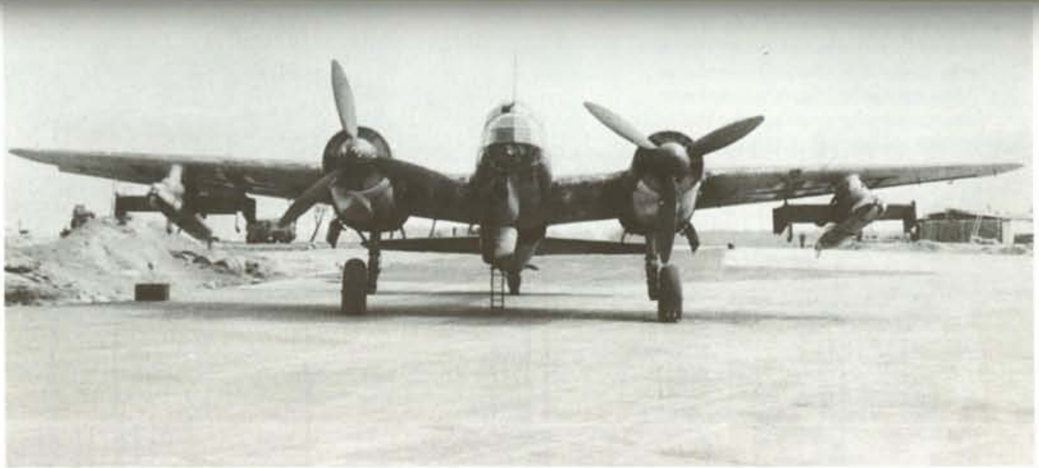

61 Drachenwinde
62 Halterung
63 Schloß mit Berckholtz-Pulversatz
64 Drachenseil
65 Flugdrachen
66 Membrankopf
67 Elt. Leitung mit Lüsterklemme
68 Gerätebrett an der Drachenwinde
103 Schleifringe und Kohlebürsten

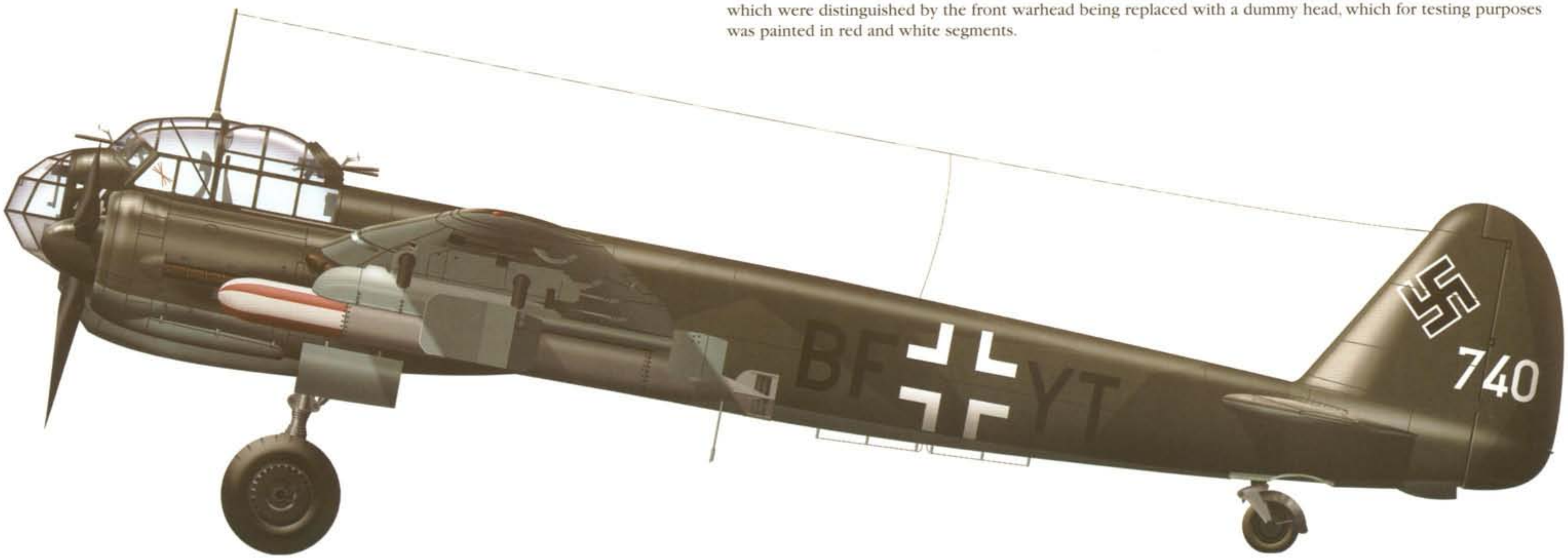
Abb. 16: Drachenwinde mit Flugdrachen

scanned by alfetta





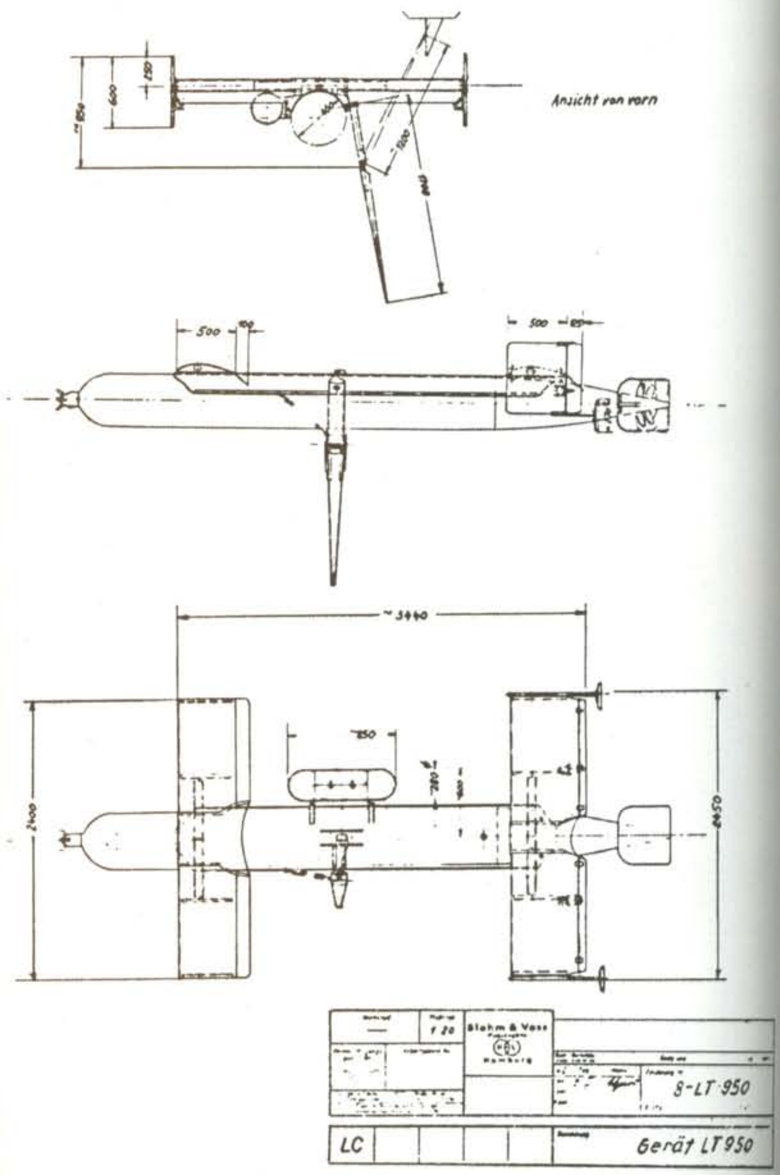
LEFT AND ABOVE: This Ju 88 A-4 was also used as a test aircraft for the L 10 mini-glider trials at the Gotenhafen-Hexengrund test centre. The two L10 torpedo carriers have been fitted with practice torpedoes, which were distinguished by the front warhead being replaced with a dummy head, which for testing purposes was painted in red and white segments.

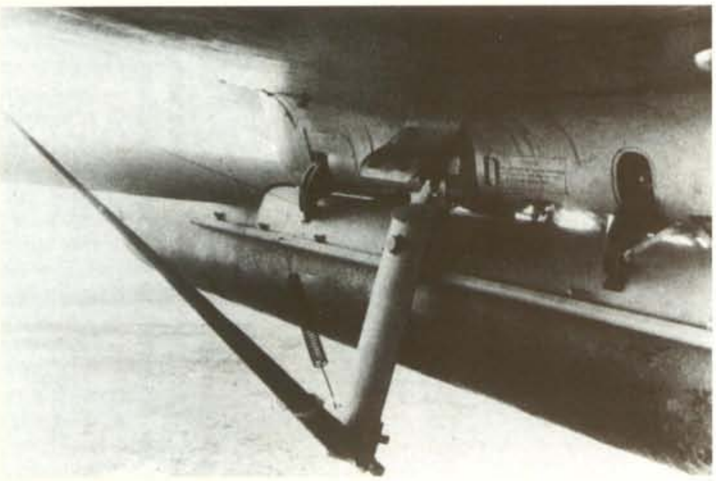


Junkers Ju 88 A-4, coded BF+YT test aircraft for the L 10 torpedo carrier
This aircraft was camouflaged in the standard factory splinter pattern of RLM 70/71 on the uppersurfaces with RLM 75 underneath. The last three digits (740) of the Werknummer were painted white on the fin and rudder as well as on the nose just behind the front glazing.

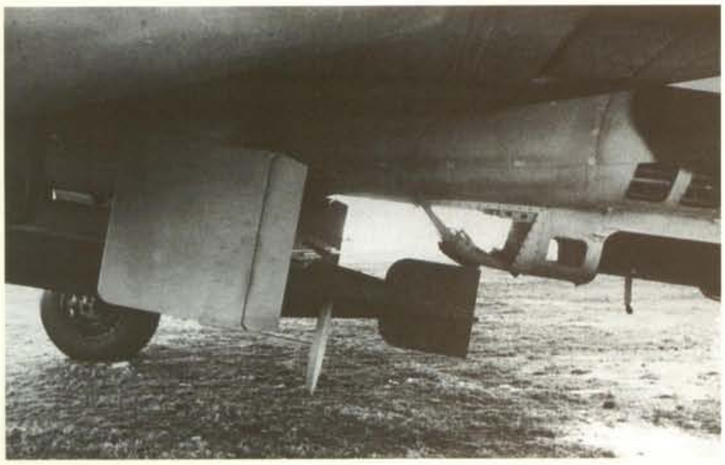
Blohm und Voss BV L 950 Glider Torpedo Carrier

RIGHT: This drawing shows a further development of the L 10 idea for launching torpedoes from higher and further distances from their target. It shows the L 950, which derived its designation from adding the weight of the glider, 750 kg, to the weight of the torpedo, 200 kg, making a total of 950 kg. The expendable glider was developed by Blohm und Voss and seven examples were built and tested. The main difference between this design and the L 10 was that the drogue extended on a wire was dispensed with and replaced with a spring-loaded downward extended 1,700 mm long arm fitted instead. Trials were undertaken and at least one test was carried out dropping the L 950 from a height of more than 1,000 metres with a distance from the target of three kilometres. Trials were stopped as it was found that the calculations required to hit a moving target from a fast flying aircraft from that distance and height proved impractical.

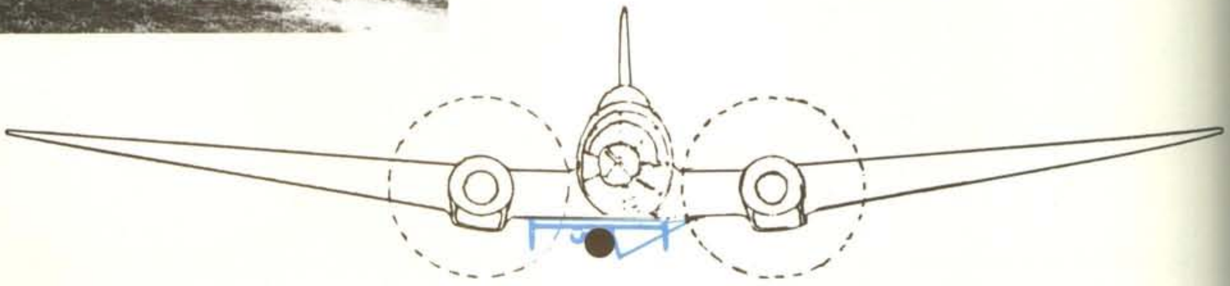


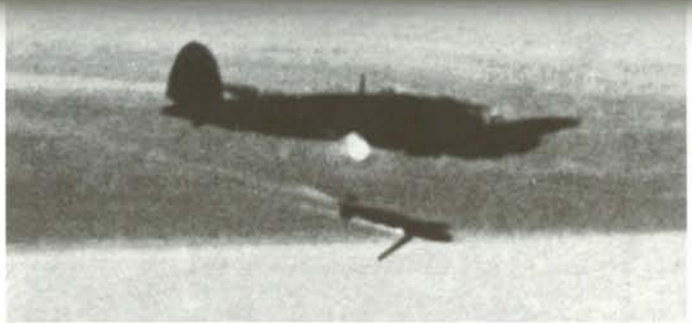


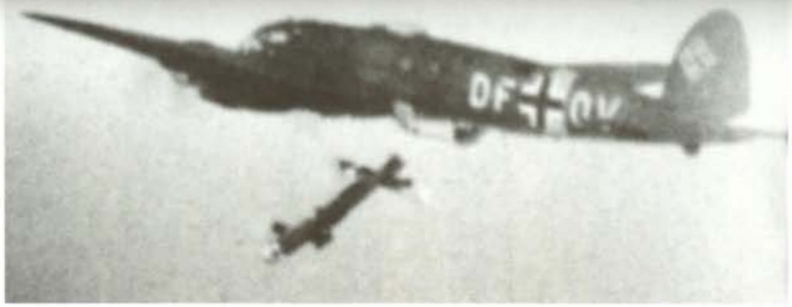
ABOVE AND BELOW: These two photographs show the installation of the L 950 V3 (third prototype) as fitted to an He 111 H-6 at the Gotenhafen-Hexengrund Torpedo Test Centre. Note in the photograph above the folded spring-loaded arm which, when extended, triggered the release of the torpedo when it touched the water (in the same fashion as the drogue in the L 10).



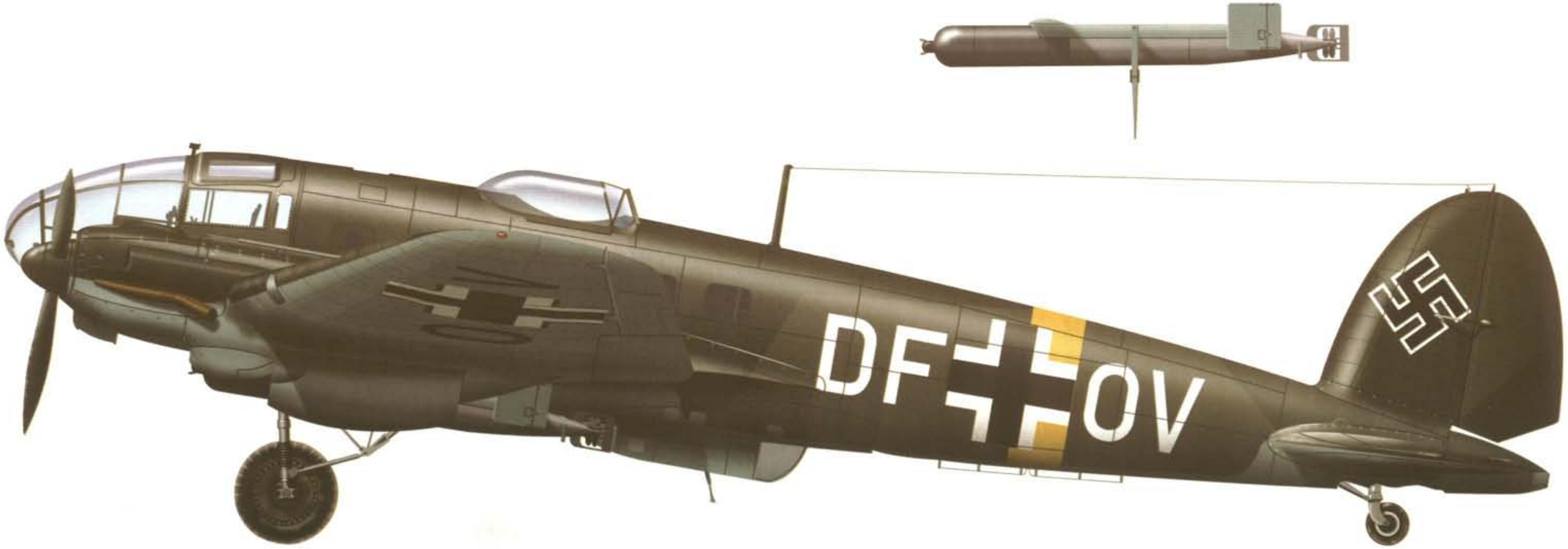
BELOW: A rough sketch taken from a contemporary German document showing the off-set position of the L 950 (in blue) under the He 111 (torpedo in black).







LEFT: A still photograph taken from a movie film showing the test drop of the L 950 V3 on 24 April 1942. The L 950 accelerated rapidly in a steady dive towards the target, which on this occasion was three kilometres away and at a height of 1,000 metres. Only seven L 950s were tested before the programme was abandoned.

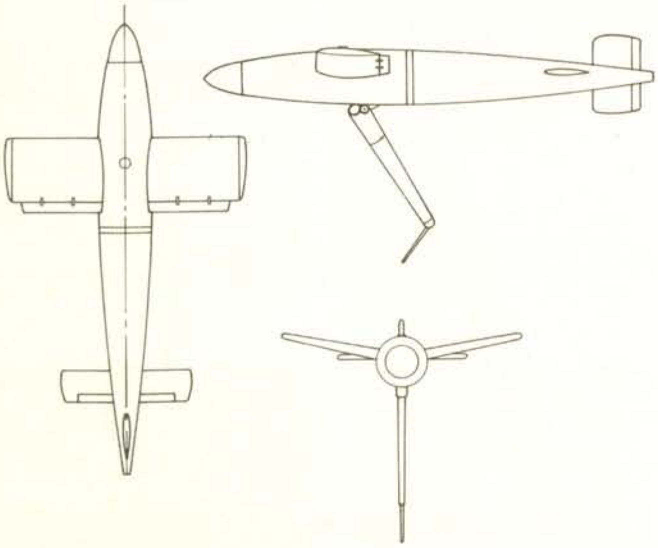


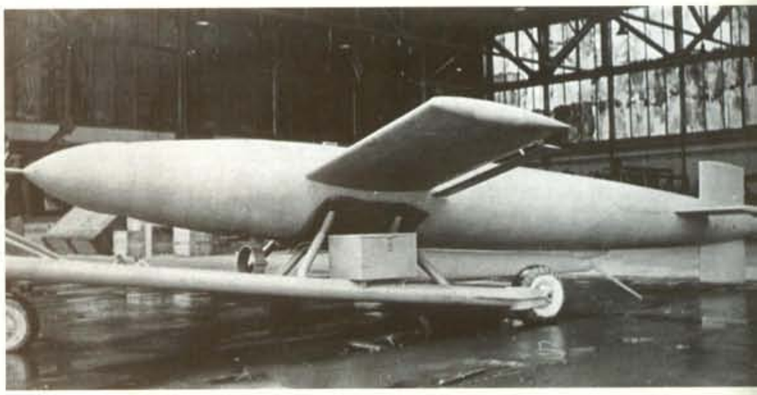
Heinkel He 111 H-6 with the factory code DF+OV, as test aircraft for the L 950 torpedo carrier

This aircraft retained the factory splinter pattern of RLM 70/71 on the uppersurfaces with RLM 65 underneath. The factory code, DF+OV, was painted in white, on the fuselage sides and also in black under the wings. Many of the Gotenhafen-Hexengrund Torpedo Test Centre aircraft appear to have their codes painted in white on the fuselage although the original factory codes were retained. This aircraft also has a yellow fuselage band painted around the fuselage forward from the back edge of the Balkenkreuz.

Experimental German Air-Launched Glide Bombs

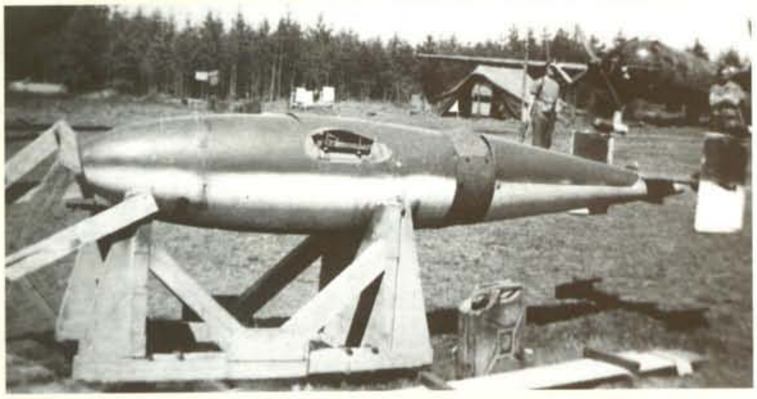
Blohm und Voss BV 143

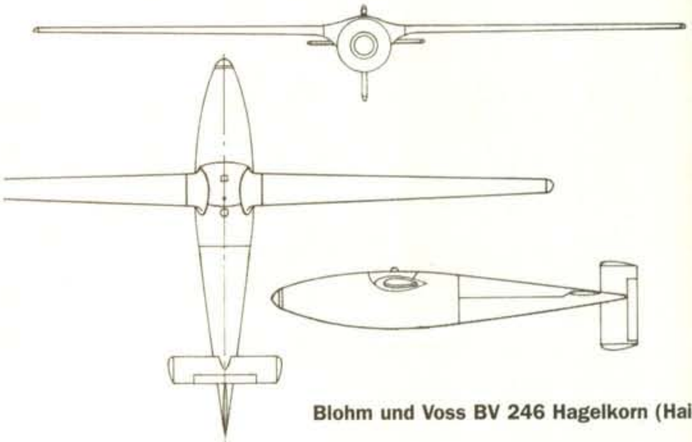




The BV 143 was a winged torpedo designed to be released from an aircraft at a distance impossible for conventional torpedoes. It had a cigar-shaped body with very simple square wings and a cruciform tail unit, and it was kept on a fixed cour by means of a gyroscopic device which adjusted the control surfaces. After release from the aircraft it approached the target in a flat guide, and when 2 m from the surface of the sea, a feeler arm hanging from the fuselage was moved by the sea to activate a rocket motor. This was intended to bring the missile into level flight wh it would speed into the vessel above the waterline.

Limitations showed up in the ability to change the height in level flight due to the length of the trigger arm beneath the fuselage. Design of an electric altimeter devi which may have solved the problem was shelved. The missile never saw operational use.





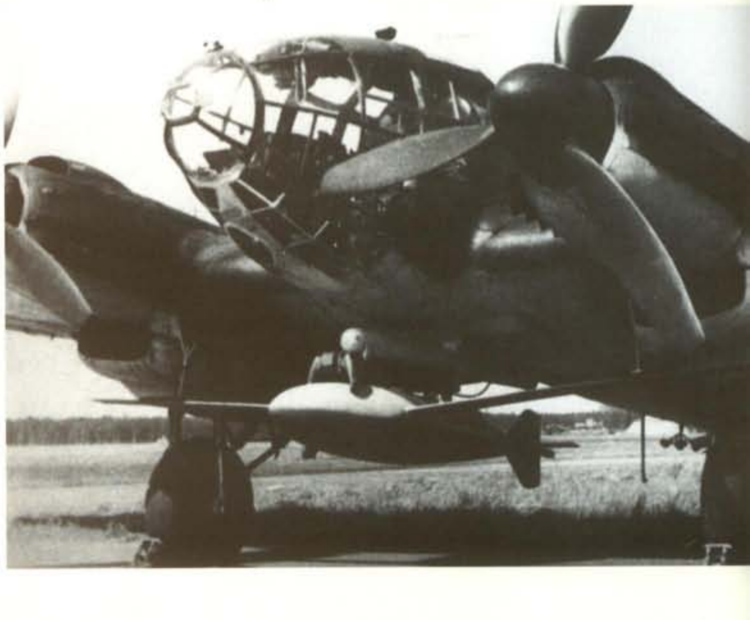
Blohm und Voss BV 246 Hagelkorn (Hailst

Similar to the BV 143 in that it was designed to approach the target in a glide from some distance, the BV 246 possessed very clean lines. The fuselage was cigar-shaped, tapering finely towards the rear where a cruciform tail unit was fitted (this changed on later models to a twin fin arrangement). A special feature was the high-mounted high aspect ratio wing, made from pre-stressed lightweight concrete. This enabled the missile to attack its target, for example, at a distance of some 210 km at a speed of around 450 km/h if the bomb was released at around 10,500 m.

A gyroscope gave control signals to the rudder, and these signals were, in turn, modified by a direction-finding device tuned to a radio beam from the launch aircraft, in this case being a He 111 or a Ju 88.

Unfortunately there was little official interest in the project due to the Allied effectiveness in countering German radio navigation aids. The weapon was stockpiled in some numbers and tests continued in a number of directions regarding alternative targets, including land-based etc. It saw limited use in this capacity with mixed results and, like a number of other promising wartime German weapons, it suffered from protracted development, bureaucratic indifference and the worsening war situation.

The photograph at the top shows a later development with a twin fin arrangement and note the wing on the ground in front of the jerrycan.



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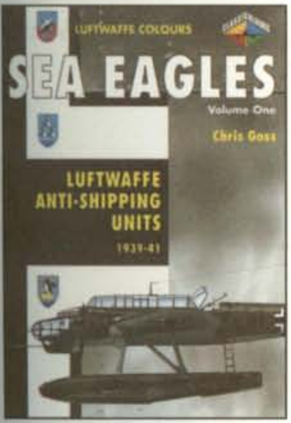
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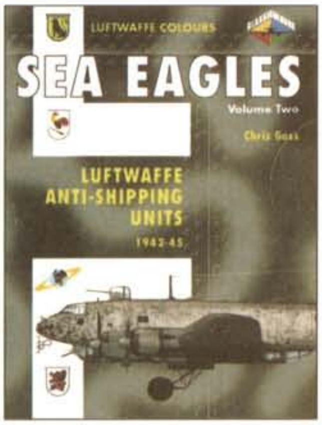
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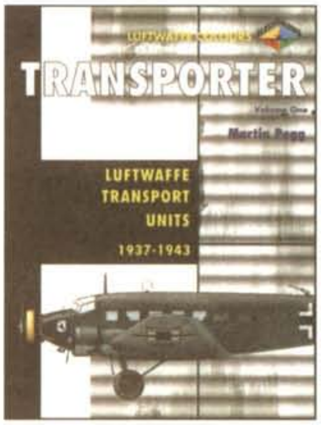
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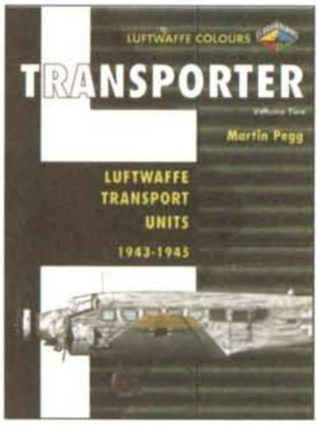
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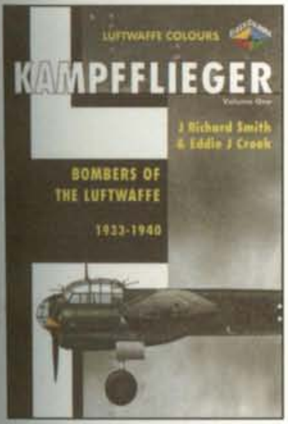
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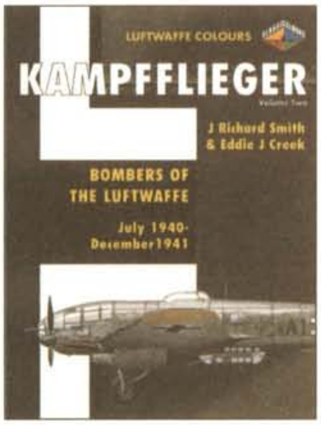
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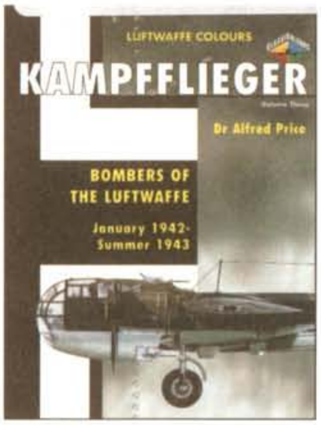
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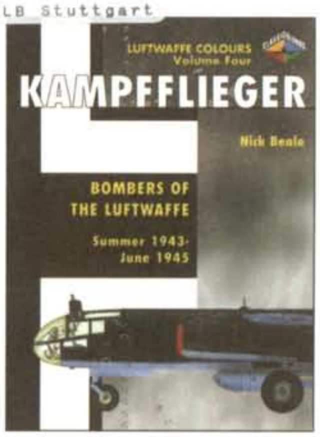
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